the weekly
Standard

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AUGUST 13, 2007 $3.95

Does Washington Have His Back?

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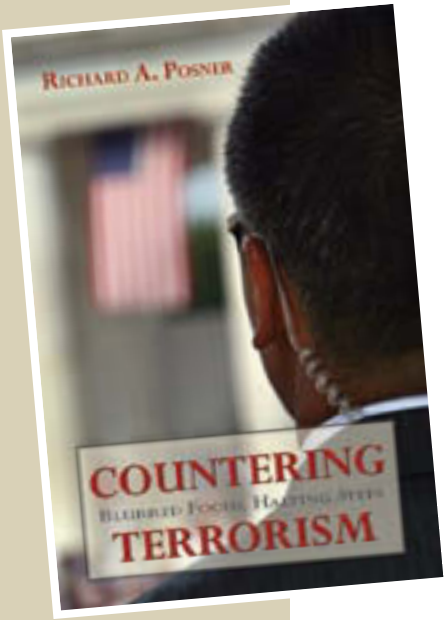

Countering Terrorism

Blurred Focus, Halting Steps

RICHARD A. POSNER

"As Judge Posner's book ably demonstrates, reform of the U.S. intelligence community has a long way to go, notwithstanding the recent Intelligence Reform Act passed into law by the Congress. His analysis of 'three cultures' and the problems of domestic intelligence are especially outstanding."

—William E. Odom, Lieutenant General, U.S. Army (Ret.)

In this third book of a series on intelligence reform, Judge Richard A. Posner evaluates the measures that have been taken in the last two years to implement the Intelligence Reform Act of 2004, which decreed a wholesale reorganization of the intelligence system. *Countering Terrorism* also addresses broader issues in the struggle against terrorism, such as the failure of criminal law enforcement and the difficulty of devising criteria for allocating counterterrorist funds. Although some successes have been achieved in the effort to make our intelligence system more coherent and effective, notably with respect to intelligence analysis and "open source" intelligence, progress overall has been slow, owing in major part to the deflection of senior officials in the intelligence community from overall supervision and coordination to short-term crisis management. Of particular concern, domestic intelligence remains in serious disarray, dangerously exposing the nation to the emergent threat of homegrown, as distinct from foreign-initiated, terrorism.

Countering Terrorism is copublished with Rowman & Littlefield.

Richard A. Posner is a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals in Chicago and a senior lecturer at the University of Chicago Law School. He is the author of hundreds of articles and dozens of books, including *Uncertain Shield: The U.S. Intelligence System in the Throes of Reform* (2006) and *Preventing Surprise Attacks: Intelligence Reform in the Wake of 9/11* (2005).

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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Hillary vs. the Pentagon

When Senator Hillary Clinton sent a letter to the Pentagon requesting information on U.S. plans for a withdrawal from Iraq, Undersecretary of Defense Eric Edelman fired off a statement: "Premature and public discussion of the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq reinforces enemy propaganda that the United States will abandon its allies in Iraq, much as we are perceived to have done in Vietnam, Lebanon and Somalia."

Edelman was right, of course. Osama bin Laden has cited this pattern of American behavior in labeling the United States a "weak horse" that can be defeated by a committed army of jihadists. Those around Washington who have been waiting for the Bush administration to fight back against the steady stream of scurrilous political attacks from their opponents took heart in the response. (Did we mention Mrs. Clinton is running for president?) The collective response from conservatives: Finally.

Clinton, for her part, had the gall to label Edelman's response "a political attack." (Did we mention Mrs. Clinton is running for president?) Of course, what Edelman actually did was offer a substantive response to Clinton's political attack.

In any case, it was a great fight for the White House, as even members of Mrs. Clinton's own party returned from Iraq to report early progress from the surge. So what did the Bush administration do? Cave, as usual.

Secretary of Defense Robert Gates wrote to Clinton that he would be "pleased to work with you and the Senate Armed Services Committee to establish a process to keep you apprised of the conceptual thinking, factors, considerations, questions and objectives associated with drawdown planning." He added: "I truly regret that this important discussion went astray and I also regret any misunderstanding of intention."

Misunderstanding of intention? Mrs. Clinton's intention was clear. In the race for the Democratic political nomination, she must prove her antiwar bona fides to the far left of her party. Pressing the Pentagon to publicize planning for a withdrawal from Iraq helps her do that.

What Gates saw as an "important discussion," Dick Cheney correctly understood as a political attack. And last week, he responded.

"I agreed with the letter Eric Edelman wrote. I thought it was a good letter," Cheney said on *Larry King Live*. "When you get into the business of talking about operational planning by the Department of Defense, you don't share that as a general proposition until you're ready to actually go out and execute those orders, and then you might share it with the Congress at that point."

Late in the week, Clinton, who understands a good fight when she sees one, asked Bush to settle this dispute between his vice president and his Pentagon chief. It's a good suggestion. ♦

Puff the Magic Kerry

The Scrapbook has taken a few swipes over the years at Robert "0-for-8" Shrum, the singularly unsuccessful Democratic campaign strategist, who worked for such legendary losers as McGovern '72, Kennedy '80, and Kerry '04. To be fair, it's hard to see anyone winning with some of the candidates he's been saddled with. Consider this anecdote from Shrum's dishy new book, *No Excuses*:

> At an evening house party [in Iowa, January 2004], [Peter Yarrow] was performing "Puff the Magic Dragon" when Kerry, standing in the back of the room, mimed puffing on a joint. Most of the people there didn't see it—and neither did I; I'd retreated back to the bus to make some calls. When [press aide David] Wade stepped onto the bus and sat down next to me, he was beside himself as he recounted what had just happened. As we drove away, Kerry denied it. Wade said it was on tape. Kerry responded that, well, it was just a joke. Wade went to the back of the bus. We were lucky, he reported when he returned. It was late Saturday night, the camera crews didn't all have it, and most of the network imbeds didn't think it was a big deal. We were told later that a CBS crew got the tape to Washington in time for *Face the Nation*, but that Bob Schieffer's reaction was, Not on my program.

Of special note here is Kerry's adolescent denial until the aide says his pantomime was caught on tape. Plus we like CBS's news judgment; probably helps explain why *Face the Nation* blows away its rivals in the ratings each Sunday. ♦

The Bonds Market

The Scrapbook is always on the lookout for solid analysis and trenchant social criticism and—well, thanks to the August 6 edition of *Newsweek*, were we ever lucky this week.

You see, we've been feeling a little ambivalent about Barry Bonds this summer as he closes in on Hank Aaron's home run record. In fact, some people

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(Classic Steiner, reprinted from our issue of December 22, 1997)

we know are positively unhappy about Barry Bonds, and instead of applauding his achievement, have been lustily booing when he steps up to the plate!

To be honest, THE SCRAPBOOK was confused by all this until we opened up *Newsweek*, and there (on page 38) David Gates spelled it out for us:

> What do we *really* hate when we boo Bonds? Wealth and privilege and cheating (they're becoming indistinguishable), defiance, getting above one's station—and also unapologetic excellence. That is, we hate ourselves: for our own furtive greed and evasions of fair play and for our very furtiveness, to which Bonds's arrogance is a rebuke.

But of course! The fact that Bonds is a low life, and a thoroughly unpleasant—not to say contemptible—human being who feasted on (illegal) steroids in middle age to enhance his physique artificially, and surpass Hank Aaron's stellar numbers by cheating, has nothing to do with it. Thanks to *Newsweek*, we now understand that we really hate *ourselves* and, in watching Barry Bonds flex his store-bought muscles, we are observing our own furtive greed and evasive defiance while resenting the unapologetic excellence of an athlete who rebukes our cheating evasions and privileged station while booing our indistinguishable wealth and arrogant fair play.

Why didn't we think of that? ♦

Oops, They Did It Again

Parade magazine continues its proud tradition of timely reporting in its July 29 issue: A reader writes, "In June, Lindsay Lohan signed on for extended care at Promises, a luxury rehab center in Malibu. Isn't that really just an extended vacation?" Indeed. Five days earlier, the 21-year-old actress had a blood-alcohol level of 0.12 (well above the 0.08 limit), failed a field-sobriety test, and was charged by Santa Monica police with a DUI and possession of cocaine. Sounds like an extended vacation to us. *Parade*, on the other hand, says: "No. Lohan . . . seems committed to finally getting clean" and quotes Promises founder Richard Rogg: "The longer people stay, the better their chances. This is a very serious 12-step program. No one should be penalized for choosing to do the hard work of recovery in a luxurious setting."

Besides making Rogg look like an idiot, *Parade* then asks its readers, "Do you think celebs get the help they need in rehab? Tell us at *Parade.com*." Why not ask "Do you think O.J. Simpson will be found guilty?" Or maybe "Do you think the Red Sox will ever win a World Series?" Stay tuned until next week! ♦

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Casual

Pane e Nino

Until last week, I had been going to A.V. Ristorante, a modest Italian restaurant on New York Avenue, for as long as I'd been in Washington—longer even. During my college years in Baltimore, my friends and I would sometimes escape to D.C. for the evening. We would eat dinner at A.V. Afterwards, we would drive a little further along New York Avenue, pass the White House on Pennsylvania Avenue, then turn back and make our way south and east to the Capitol. We'd go sit on the Capitol steps until late into the night, smoking cigars and gazing west up the Mall and the broad, empty boulevards and making conversation with the occasional Capitol Police officer.

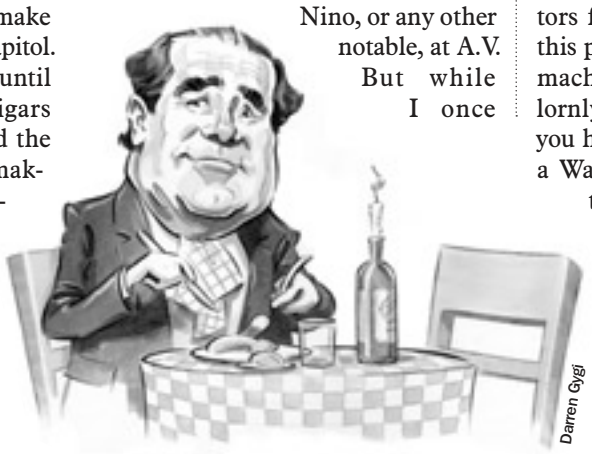
That was many years ago. Today, the road past the White House has been closed to traffic, the steps of the Capitol have been closed to the public, and A.V. Ristorante has been closed to the world.

Even before these changes, A.V. was from another era. Opened in 1949 by Augusto Vasaio, it stayed in the family. When Augusto died in 1982, his wife Assunta (known as Sue) took over, and later their sons August and Johnny kept up the place. Augusto's grandson, August Jr., worked there until the very end, walking the floor and even waiting tables.

In our callow youth, my friends and I were drawn to A.V. by the lure of celebrity. Or at least what passes for celebrity in Washington. Antonin Scalia had frequented the small, dark restaurant since he first arrived in Georgetown in the 1950s. To a certain kind of young man, the prospect of happening upon the preeminent legal mind of our time enjoying carbonara at a neighborhood hole in the wall was incredibly alluring.

Justice Scalia was but one of the bright lights who dined at A.V. over the years. I later learned that Alfonse D'Amato and Denny Hastert were regulars, as was Janet Reno during her time in town. Fred Thompson, Jimmy Hoffa, Strom Thurmond, and Russ Feingold had all been patrons. So too had some actual celebrities, including Jack Nicholson and even, once upon a time, Cary Grant and Mae West.

I never did spot Nino, or any other notable, at A.V. But while I once found this slightly deflating, I came to appreciate it. More than any other American city, Washington is a town of pretensions. A.V. had none. The decor consisted of cheap wood paneling and red-and-white checked plastic table cloths. They served wine in squat, glass tumblers and specialized in a garlic-laden white pizza that was served not whole, but chopped into small pieces and stacked in a basket. A lights-out dinner for two might cost $40. In 1980 a *Washington Post* food writer related the story of a man who'd been accidentally overcharged by $25 at A.V. He didn't notice it at the time, but as they were doing the books at the end of the evening, the Vasaios did. The next day they tracked the fellow down and gave him back his money.


Darren Gygi

The entrance to A.V. featured a jukebox stuffed with opera records and two walls filled with pictures and memorabilia—lots of smiling politicians and glad-handers. No commercial establishment in Washington is complete without an ego wall. But the crown jewel of this collection was a letter from Vice President Hubert Humphrey in 1968, thanking the Vasaios for bringing patients from Bethesda Naval Hospital to the restaurant and treating them to dinner. This "did a great deal for their morale," Humphrey wrote, "and let them know that they were not forgotten."

Modernity had been encroaching on A.V. for years. The restaurant used to be lit by candles stuck in empty wine bottles. The city's fire inspectors forced management to abandon this practice in 1998. An old cigarette machine with pull-handles sat forlornly just inside the front door, but you haven't been allowed to smoke in a Washington restaurant for almost two years. I suppose it was only a matter of time before an increasingly censorious city decided that the business itself should make way for bigger and better things.

In 2003, the District opened a gargantuan new convention center in the Mount Vernon Square neighborhood, two blocks from A.V. The project was meant to reinvigorate a declining area in which A.V. had been, for years, the only bright spot. To the extent that these things can be measured, the plan seems to have worked: Today there are nearly as many construction cranes as parking meters around Mount Vernon Square.

One of the developers took an interest in the land A.V. is sitting on. Perhaps noting the city's penchant for the exercise of eminent domain, the Vasaios sold. The restaurant will be replaced by condominiums and office space.

Next to lawyers and drug stores, it's hard to think of anything Washington needs less.

Jonathan V. Last

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The Brave Boomers

In his commendable effort to praise the current generation that stepped up to the plate in the wake of 9/11 ("The 9/11 Generation: Better than the Boomers," July 30), Dean Barnett levels a gratuitous slander against those of us who came of age in the 1960s. While those anointed as "the leading lights" of the Boomer generation may have avoided "their moment of challenge," most of us did, in fact, "answer the phone" when "history called."

Barnett buys into the mythology of the 1960s antiwar left. According to the self-image of the '60s radicals, e.g. Tom Hayden, "We of the Sixties accomplished more than most generations in American history." In this view, the sixties were exciting, heroic, and uniquely infused with moral passion, the "Promethean moment," in the words of one commentator, "when the Chosen Ones went through hell to save their souls and ours." These were the ones who opposed the war and who now are presumed by Barnett to represent the Vietnam generation.

On the other hand, those who actually fought the war are, for the most part, portrayed as losers who were victimized by the war. They were drafted and shipped off to fight an immoral war, all too often returning as burned out wrecks. Indeed, the Traumatized Vietnam Vet has become a staple of the popular culture, evidence to the contrary notwithstanding.

According to the conventional wisdom, those who served in Vietnam were mostly young, poor, and nonwhite. Many, if not most, committed or observed atrocities (thank you, John Kerry). The horrors of the war led many to turn to drugs and a life of crime. Vietnam veterans are disproportionately represented among the homeless and the incarcerated. The Vietnam veteran was and is a time bomb waiting to go off.

The clear sense of Barnett's piece is that he accepts these caricatures as true, and accepts the judgment of American elites that the former are the legitimate voice of the Vietnam "generation." But as Jim Webb, the bestselling novelist who was awarded a Navy Cross for valor in Vietnam as a Marine infantry officer and who now serves as the junior senator from Virginia, has observed, the cohort that came of age in the 1960s is not so much a "generation" as an age-group divided along cultural fault lines, none of which was more important than conflicting attitudes toward the war. Writing in *The American Enterprise* several years ago, Sen. Webb observed:

"The sizable portion of the Vietnam age group who declined to support the counter-cultural agenda, and especially the men and women who opted to serve in the military during the Vietnam War, are quite different from their peers who for decades have claimed to speak for

them. In fact, they are much like the World War II generation itself. For them, Woodstock was a side show, college protestors were spoiled brats who would have benefitted from having to work a few jobs in order to pay their tuition, and Vietnam represented not an intellectual exercise in draft avoidance or protest marches but a battlefield that was just as brutal as those their fathers faced in World War II and Korea."

Webb's point is important. Many of us who went to Vietnam were emulating our fathers and uncles who had fought in World War II. We saw communism in Southeast Asia as they saw fascism in Europe and Japan. The people whom Barnett has in mind certainly did not, and do not, speak for us. Here are some figures that Barnett might wish to ponder: Nine million American men joined the military during the Vietnam years. Of the three million men who served in Vietnam, two-thirds were volunteers. Seventy-three percent of those who died there were volunteers. According to a 1980 Harris Poll commissioned by the Veterans' Administration (VA), acknowledged to be the most accurate survey of Vietnam veteran attitudes, 91 percent of those who saw combat in Vietnam were "glad they'd served their country," 74 percent enjoyed their time in the service, and 89 percent agreed with the statement that "our troops were asked to fight in a war which our political leaders in Washington would not let them win." Eighty percent disagreed with the statement that "the U.S. took advantage of me." And remarkably, nearly two out of three said they would go to Vietnam again, even knowing how the war would end. Most returned from the war and got on with their lives. The "dysfunctional" Vietnam vet is a slander.

I for one came of age in the 1960s, turning 23 while serving as a Marine infantry platoon leader in Vietnam. Many of my men turned 19 there. Too many of them did not see 20. When I think of the men with whom I served in Vietnam, I would be willing to put them up against any other group of soldiers in history. These were the best men I have ever known. In his generalization about the Boomers, Barnett is making an error that I have come to expect in movies, television, and other examples of the popular culture, but one I believe is unworthy of a writer for The Weekly Standard.

Mackubin Thomas Owens
Newport, R.I.

As a midshipman at the Naval Academy, I was flattered by Dean Barnett's praise of "The 9/11 Generation." However, the article downplayed the contributions of the Baby Boomers. We shouldn't forget they were responsible for raising us and teaching us the values that inspire us to defend this country.

W.T. Door
Annapolis, Md.

Dean Barnett's otherwise admirable article states, "In the 1970s, '80s, and '90s, military service didn't occur to most young people as an option, let alone a duty." He was right about the '70s, but the combination of Ronald Reagan and the first Gulf war made the '80s and early '90s a golden age of recruiting. The high standards and high quality of the modern American military were born in those years. It's also when most of the current senior leadership of the Armed Forces,

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enlisted and officers alike, went into uniform. The fact that post-9/11 troops are highly motivated and highly professional is gratifying, but it's not new.

CHASE UNTERMEYER
Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, 1984–88
Doha, Qatar

VALIANT VOLUNTEERS

WILLIAM KRISTOL'S EDITORIAL, "They Don't Really Support the Troops" (July 30), deftly exposes the hypocrisy of those on the far left claiming to support our troops while at the same time vilifying everything our troops represent. One point Kristol did not make in his article that I feel should be pointed out over and over again is that all of our troops are volunteers. There is not one conscript or draftee in our military. My son is a Marine, and he, like all of his comrades in arms, is where he is because he believes in the cause he is fighting for.

MICHAEL HUNEKE
Waco, Tex.

AL QAEDA ON THE RUN

THOMAS JOSCELYN'S "Iraq Is the Central Front" (July 30) was refreshing. Many in the antiwar crowd erroneously imply that the war should have been confined to Afghanistan and that expansion into Iraq was unnecessary and foolhardy.

Any map shows that Afghanistan is landlocked. Essential resupply (at least 20 pounds per man per day) must come by sea. Extended combat operations simply cannot be sustained by airlift. In the early '80s the Soviets tried to add Afghanistan to their Evil Empire, and the Islamic world responded by pouring thousands of volunteers into the fight. Even though the Soviets shared a border with Afghanistan, they still found it difficult to supply their forces. Having learned from the Soviet debacle, America's campaign in Afghanistan was tailored to remove the Taliban regime and avoid putting down a big footprint. Policymakers realized that to successfully prosecute the war on terror, we would have to fight in areas where we could establish lines of communication to support the tremendous flow of resources upon which success depends. Iraq met those all-important logistical criteria and was ruled by a dangerous thug hostile to the United States. Were the United States to have made Afghanistan the primary focus of our efforts, jihadists from throughout the world would have met us on terrain that is a guerilla's paradise and put us in an untenable situation similar to that which led to the Soviets' failure.

As Joscelyn shows, the jihadists who would rather fight American flight attendants than our soldiers, sailors, and Marines are now in Iraq, where we can defeat them. And now we've got them on the run.

FRANKLYN J. SELZER
Colonel, USAF (Ret.)
Fairfax, Va.

EQUALITY IN SUFFERING

ANN MARLOWE has performed an important service in pointing out our wrongheaded post-Taliban focus on Afghan women through the lens of naive American feminist agendas ("Understanding the Afghans," July 30).

But she has erred in repeating the false claim with which Afghan Communists have tried to rewrite the record: that they were "the first and only rulers to treat Afghan women with a semblance of equality." By the time Marlowe was in Kabul in 1974, the Communists were already in control behind the scenes, so that may be what she heard—but it was not true. The reformist constitution of 1964 laid the foundation for a constitutional monarchy with equal rights for men and women. By 1965 women in Kabul were teachers, office workers, doctors, nurses, and members of parliament.

The Communists who seized power openly in 1978 imprisoned and tortured women; demanded sexual favors for party members, and shot down protesting girl students in the streets. That was the equality they granted to Afghan women—equality in suffering.

The Afghans always liked Americans, but we have, alas, undercut that traditional friendship with our errors since 2002. If we are to undo any of the mistakes we have made in Afghanistan, it is important for Americans to develop an even greater understanding of Afghan society and history. Thankfully Marlowe has at last kicked open the door to that essential discussion.

ROSANNE KLASS
New York, N.Y.

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The Turn

Hot July brings cooling showers, / Apricots and gillyflowers, as Sara Coleridge's doggerel has it. But for the American antiwar movement, this July brought only a cold drizzle, wilted blossoms, and bitter fruit.

For the Iraq war's opponents, July began as a month of hope. It ended in retreat. It began with Democratic unity in proclaiming the inevitability of American defeat. It ended with respected military analysts—Democrats, no less!—reporting that the situation on the ground had improved, and that the war might be winnable. It began with a plan for a series of votes in Congress that were supposed to stampede nervous Republicans against the continued prosecution of the war. It ended with the GOP spine stiffened, no antiwar legislation passed, and the Democratic Congress adjourning in disarray, with approval ratings lower than President Bush's. It began with Democratic presidential candidates competing in their antiwar pandering. It ended with them having second thoughts—with Barack Obama, losing ground to Hillary Clinton because he seemed naive about real world threats, frantically suggesting that he would invade Pakistan.

July also began with the liberal media disparaging the troops. It ended with the liberal media in retreat. The *New Republic* had to acknowledge that its pseudonymous soldier's account of an incident purportedly showing the dehumanizing effects of the Iraq conflict was a lie: It had taken place in Kuwait (if it happened at all), before this imaginative private ever saw the horrors of war. The *New York Times* was so shocked to discover in late July that public opinion hadn't continued to move against the war that it redid a poll. The answer didn't change.

This last incident, though minor, is revealing. On July 24 the *Times* reported that a new survey had found an increase in the number of Americans retrospectively backing the liberation of Iraq:

> Americans' support for the initial invasion of Iraq has risen somewhat as the White House has continued to ask the public to reserve judgment about the war until at least the fall. In a *New York Times*/CBS News poll conducted over the weekend, 42 percent of Americans said that looking back, taking military action in Iraq was the right thing to do, while 51 percent said the United States should have stayed out of Iraq. . . . Support for the invasion had been at an all-time low in May, when only 35 percent of Americans said the invasion of Iraq was the right thing and 61 percent said the United States should have stayed out.

In the *Times*'s view, as explained on its website, this result was "counterintuitive"—so much so that the editors had the poll repeated to see whether they had "gotten it right." Turns out they had.

As the *Wall Street Journal*'s James Taranto commented: "Well, two cheers for the paper's diligence, but this also seems to be about as close as we're going to get to an admission of bias: an acknowledgment that those at the *Times* are flummoxed that the public is not responding the way they expect to all the bad news they've been reporting."

What's striking is that the *Times* was flummoxed. In the real world, the news from Iraq had been (relatively) good for a couple of months. General David Petraeus's military success had been followed with striking political achievements in Anbar province. At home, a mood of annoyance at the Bush administration's conduct of the war had started to yield to a realization that we were approaching a choice of paths on Iraq, and that the consequences of embracing defeat would be severe. But that's not the world the *Times* editors live in. In their world, this is a war that should never have been fought and that has long been irretrievably lost—and everyone should simply accept those settled facts.

In the real world, the public is skeptical of the administration's stance on Iraq—but not overwhelmingly or irretrievably so. Here's what a new Rasmussen poll says: "Twenty-five percent of voters now say the troop surge is working and another 26 percent say it's too soon to tell. A month ago, just 19 percent considered the surge a success and 24 percent said it was too early to tell." This means that 51 percent are now at least open to giving the policy more time. That's up from 43 percent a month ago.

Given the mistakes the Bush administration has made over the past four years, given the real challenges still ahead, given mainstream media bias in general and the lag in public understanding of what has happened in the last three months on the ground in Iraq in particular, these numbers aren't bad. And they're moving in the right direction. The public remains more sensible than much of elite opinion—and more open to new facts.

That's good, since progress on the ground in Iraq is likely to continue. It can't be taken for granted, given the nature of a war against a ruthless and adaptable enemy. Still, one British general—no cheerleader for our conduct of the war in the past—told me in Baghdad last week, "It's getting better—and I don't see why it shouldn't continue to do so." And, despite the mainstream media, reports of that

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progress should continue to seep into the American public's consciousness. "This war is lost," Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid stated without qualification a few months ago, adding that it required "blind hope, blind trust" to believe in progress of any sort. But Reid is now in the position of holding blindly to his embrace of defeat. He has to deny facts in order to sustain his bleak judgment.

This denial will likely get more and more difficult. After all, civilian deaths in Baghdad are decreasing, and al Qaeda's networks and safe havens are being systematically disrupted. In Anbar, and now in Diyala, a bottom-up reconciliation is moving ahead as tribal sheikhs have turned against al Qaeda and are siding with American troops and Iraqi Security Forces. Ramadi, once among the most dangerous cities in Iraq, is now dramatically safer—our group walked through its downtown last week without body armor (though, of course, accompanied by several well-armed American soldiers).

As Michael E. O'Hanlon and Kenneth M. Pollack put it in their *New York Times* op-ed on July 30,

> Viewed from Iraq, where we just spent eight days meeting with American and Iraqi military and civilian personnel, the political debate in Washington is surreal. . . . Here is the most important thing Americans need to understand: We are finally getting somewhere in Iraq, at least in military terms. As two analysts who have harshly criticized the Bush administration's miserable handling of Iraq, we were surprised by the gains we saw and the potential to produce not necessarily "victory" but a sustainable stability that both we and the Iraqis could live with.

What's more, the public debate will move from a referendum on Bush's conduct of the war over the past four years to a discussion of the choices ahead, as Gen. Petraeus's testimony in September draws near. The public will finally have to consider seriously the implications of giving up on Iraq, as opposed to supporting the continued prosecution of a war we might well win. This debate should bring home to nervous Republicans in particular the truth that panicked abandonment of the war effort is the worst gambit available to them (to say nothing of the most dishonorable). Meanwhile, Democrats, who have been pandering to their antiwar base, will increasingly see that they have—as the third-ranking Democrat in the House, James Clyburn, acknowledged last week—"a problem." If Petraeus reports progress, Clyburn acknowledged, then "I think there would be enough support" among moderate Democrats "to want to stay the course, and if the Republicans were to stay united as they have been, then it would be a problem for us."

So here is where we are: In terms of U.S. national interests—and in terms of its own political well-being—the Republican party faces a moment when, to paraphrase Winston Churchill, honor points the path of duty, and the right judgment of the facts reinforces the dictates of honor. General Petraeus will deliver the facts in September. If Republicans can keep their nerve under media and elite assault, then they will have the honor of following the path of both duty and the right judgment of the facts. I suspect all will come out well. Americans can sometimes be impatient and short-sighted. But when a choice is clearly presented, they tend to reject the path of defeat and dishonor.

—William Kristol

Michael Ramirez

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The Iraq Shuffle

The congressional Democrats waltz around inconvenient facts. BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI

Last week, when the *New York Times* published an op-ed arguing that Gen. David Petraeus should be allowed more time to pursue his counterinsurgency strategy in Iraq, supporters of President Bush's "surge" got excited. The political momentum seemed to shift in their direction. But Bush's supporters shouldn't get carried away. They are in danger of seriously underestimating the ability of those who believe the war is lost or was always unwinnable to ignore, deny, and attack all news of positive developments. They should not underestimate the popularity of what you might call the Iraq shuffle.

Antiwar activity seemed to crescendo in July, when leaks to the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* suggested the Bush administration was planning a significant reduction in American forces or a major shift in strategic goals in Iraq in coming months. The leaks—combined with congressional demands for a progress report on political and security "benchmarks" in Iraq and public criticism from several GOP senators that the current war strategy isn't working—caught the administration off guard. It scrambled to complete the progress report, explain the lack of political progress in Baghdad, and fight off further Republican defections.

It appears the administration was successful. In the House on July 12, only 4 Republicans voted with Democrats to pass the "Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act," fewer than the 10 Democrats who crossed party lines to vote against the bill. And in the Senate on July 18, only 4 Republicans voted with Democrats to invoke cloture on Levin-Reed, the most popular antiwar amendment mandating major troop reductions by next spring. When the vote failed, Senate majority leader Harry Reid pulled the Defense Authorization Bill from the floor rather than allow votes on Republican amendments that probably would have passed easily. Meanwhile, the *USA Today*/Gallup poll showed a majority of Americans wanted to hear Gen. Petraeus's scheduled September report to Congress before supporting any drastic moves to end the war.

Those developments set the stage for a hard week for antiwar congressional Democrats eager to cause maximum damage to the administration before the August recess. It all began on Monday, July 30, when the headline "A War We Might Just Win" appeared on the *Times* opinion page over a piece by Brookings Institution scholars Michael O'Hanlon and Kenneth Pollack. The two left-leaning national security experts, backers of the invasion of Iraq but also critics of the administration's "miserable handling" of war policy, recently returned from their second (O'Hanlon) and third (Pollack) trip to Iraq. They found that the United States is "finally getting somewhere," at least "in military terms." O'Hanlon and Pollack conclude: "The surge cannot go on forever. But there is enough good happening on the battlefields of Iraq today that Congress should plan on sustaining the effort at least into 2008."

These words, coming from two well-regarded members of the Democratic foreign policy establishment and appearing on the nation's most liberal editorial page, resonated profoundly among war supporters in the White House and Congress. Right-wing radio talk show hosts began citing the O'Hanlon/Pollack op-ed, as did House Republicans during a debate on Iraq policy. Republican presidential candidate Rudy Giuliani told talk show host Bill Bennett that when he read the piece, "I dropped my coffee." Supporters of the surge, who had long been aware of positive developments in Anbar province and elsewhere, felt as if their message finally was getting out.

Is it? It is hard to say. Antiwar Democrats immediately started dancing the Iraq shuffle, in which you ignore your opponent's arguments, shift the terms of the debate, and attack his motivation and character. Witness the left's reaction to a recent interview Petraeus gave to conservative talk show host Hugh Hewitt. Rather than rebutting Petraeus's findings, lefty bloggers accused the general of being a partisan political actor. Or consider the liberal, antiwar Center for American Progress's "Progress Report" of July 31, entitled "Bush's Enablers." The email newsletter is sent to left-wing political operatives, activists, and journalists throughout the country and is a reliable barometer of progressive opinion.

Rather than rebut O'Hanlon and Pollack's evidence of progress in Anbar, the reduction in (still high) civilian fatality rates, and the growing capability, integration, and accountability of Iraqi army units, the Progress Report said the authors were "cherry-picking anecdotal signs of progress in order to justify continuing a war they supported from the beginning." Rather than acknowledge the extraordinary alliance between coalition forces and the tribal sheikhs who rule Anbar, the Progress Report redirected attention to the problems facing the Iraqi national government—problems O'Hanlon and Pollack acknowledge in their op-ed. And rather than assuming its opponents

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argue in good faith, the Progress Report accused O'Hanlon and Pollack of "providing political cover for the administration's misguided war policies."

And so it goes. In recent days, however, surge critics seem to be performing the Iraq shuffle more frequently. A well-publicized instance came on July 27, when Democratic congresswoman Nancy Boyda of Kansas stormed out of a House Armed Services Committee hearing in which Gen. Jack Keane, the former Army vice chief of staff, and Lawrence Korb, an analyst at the Center for American Progress, gave divergent takes on the surge. Keane reported on the progress he had seen in mixed Sunni/Shiite neighborhoods during a recent trip to Baghdad. It is Gen. Petraeus's strategy of securing the Iraqi population that is responsible for such progress, Keane said.

"There was only so much you could take until we in fact had to leave the room for a while," Boyda said when she returned to the hearing. "So I think I am back and maybe can articulate some things—after so much of the frustration of having to listen to what we listened to. But let me first just say that the description of Iraq as in some way or another that it's a place that I might take the family for a vacation—things are going so well—those kinds of comments will in fact show up in the media and further divide this country instead of saying, 'Here's the reality of the problem.'"

General Keane hadn't recommended Iraq as a vacation spot. But that did not stop Boyda from indulging in hyperbole and suggesting his evidence of progress would "further divide this country." The implication is that the country would unify if only Gen. Keane and others who see encouraging signs would be quiet—a corrosive sentiment in a democracy sustained through public debate.

When conversation turns to the implications of American withdrawal from Iraq, the dance intensifies. The conservative blogosphere was abuzz last week over an interview the legendary *New York Times* war correspondent John F. Burns, who has been reporting from Iraq since 2002, gave to Hugh Hewitt. Burns told Hewitt that if America were to withdraw precipitously from Iraq, up to a million Iraqis might die in the ensuing violence. A recent *Time* cover story on withdrawal concluded that if the Americans left, "Iraq could bleed like the former Yugoslavia did from 1992 to 1995, when 250,000 perished." Yet antiwar senator John Kerry has denied even the possibility that such mass killing might occur, and antiwar senator and Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama says even if such slaughter is possible, it shouldn't factor into decisions over withdrawal.

"If that's the criteria by which we are making decisions on the deployment of U.S. forces," Obama recently told the Associated Press, "then by that argument you would have 300,000 troops in the Congo right now—where millions have been slaughtered as a consequence of ethnic strife—which we haven't done. We would be deploying unilaterally and occupying the Sudan, which we haven't done. Those of us who care about Darfur don't think it would be a good idea." Here Obama sets an impossible standard for humanitarian intervention. By his logic, America should not act to prevent mass slaughter in a country it has occupied since 2003 unless it is willing to intervene wherever ethnic or sectarian killing may be taking place.

The antiwar reaction to the O'Hanlon/Pollack op-ed, and to the likely consequences of American withdrawal, suggest what will happen come September, when Petraeus reports to Congress. Those who want to leave Iraq as quickly as possible will ignore contrary evidence. They will attempt to shift the debate onto the ground where they are strongest. They will attack the messenger. For those most committed to American withdrawal from Iraq, no amount of positive reporting will matter. They will be too busy dancing the Iraq shuffle. ♦

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Atheist Tracts

God, they're predictable.

BY HARVEY MANSFIELD

As if we were back in eighteenth-century France, atheist tracts are abroad in our land, their flamboyant titles defiant. *The God Delusion*, *God Is Not Great*, *Letter to a Christian Nation*, *Atheist Manifesto*, *Atheist Universe*: These are not subtle insinuations against God, requiring inferences from readers, but open opposition inviting readers to join in thumbing their noses. *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism*, newly published, offers comfort and scholarly reassurance, if not consolation, to atheists who might otherwise feel lonely—as, believing what they do, they surely must.

Atheism isn't what it was in the eighteenth century. Now, the focus of the attack is not the Church, which is no longer dominant, but religion itself. The disdain one used to hear for "organized religion" extends now to the individual believer's faith. Despite the change, politics is still the thrust of the attack. It's just that the delusion of religion is now allowed to be the responsibility of the believer, not of some group that is deluding him. A more direct approach is required.

In our time, religion, having lost its power to censor and dominate, still retains its ability, in America especially, to compete for adherents in our democracy of ideas. So to reduce the influence of religion, it is politically necessary to attack it in the private sphere as well as in the public square. This suggests that the distinction between public and private, dear to our common liberalism, is sometimes a challenge to maintain.

Harvey Mansfield is professor of government at Harvard University and the author, most recently, of Manliness.

If religion, then, cannot be defended merely on the ground that it is private, what might be said in its behalf for the public good? We know from behavioral studies that, to the embarrassment of atheists, believers, or at least churchgoers, are better citizens—more active and law-abiding—than those who spend Sunday morning reading the *New York Times*. But why should this be so? And is it really true that atheists, with their newfound aggressiveness, are not public-spirited?

A person of faith might respond to the atheists that God's providence rules, but His mind is unknown to us. We might hope or guess or infer that God gives us freedom to make mistakes, to sin, to offend God, even to expound atheism—but we could not be sure of this. Our uncertainty as to God's intentions preserves the distance between man and God and prevents us from claiming imperiously that we know what God wants to happen. From this negative conclusion one might move to the positive inference that in leaving us free, God leaves us to choose and, to make choice effective, leaves us to choose not merely this or that detail of our lives, but a way of life comprehensively in politics.

But surely not just any politics, arbitrarily posited. We must have a politics that aims at justice. The atheists say that God is unjust because He allows injustice to exist, to thrive. Worse than that, God is complicit in injustice. The reason why "God is not great," in Christopher Hitchens's book title, is that God allows himself to be used, hence diminished, by His believers. Note that the atheist Hitchens, like a believer, wants God to be great. A God of limited powers is not God; God must be omnipotent to ensure that justice triumphs in the world. Hitchens doesn't believe in God, but that is because he does believe in justice. Justice must be realizable if the reproach to God is that He is unjust.

Now we must take a further step guided by human reason alone. Edmund Burke said, with a view to the atheism of the French Revolution, that we cannot live justly and happily unless we live under "a power out of ourselves." By this he meant a power above us, transcendent over our wills and our choices. We must choose to live under a power that limits our choices. In America we have a Constitution that limits our choices, not so much by forbidding things as by requiring us to make our choices through a political process of checks and balances, enforced by a separation of powers. But Burke means to argue that humanly contrived constitutional limits are not enough. Human government is not viable or sufficient without divine government above it in some unspecified relationship.

Is such a divine, transcendent power possible? The atheists say it is not. They say that man is by nature a tool-maker, not a religious being who yearns to worship God. In their view worship is nothing but a tool to get what we want; the power allegedly over us is "out of us" in the sense of originating in our selves. "Religion poisons everything," says Hitchens in the subtitle of his book, because every believer's private desires are given terrific force over others' desires without their consent. Religion makes believers into tyrants. The source of religious tyranny is therefore human, when men conceive of religion and convince themselves while fooling others that they deserve to have what they can get. Atheism uncovers the fact of human tyranny that uses religion as a mask.

Is there an atheist alternative to tyranny? Is there such a thing as a nonreligious principle, replacing God, that is truly transcendent and not a tool of our passions? One can think of such a principle, something

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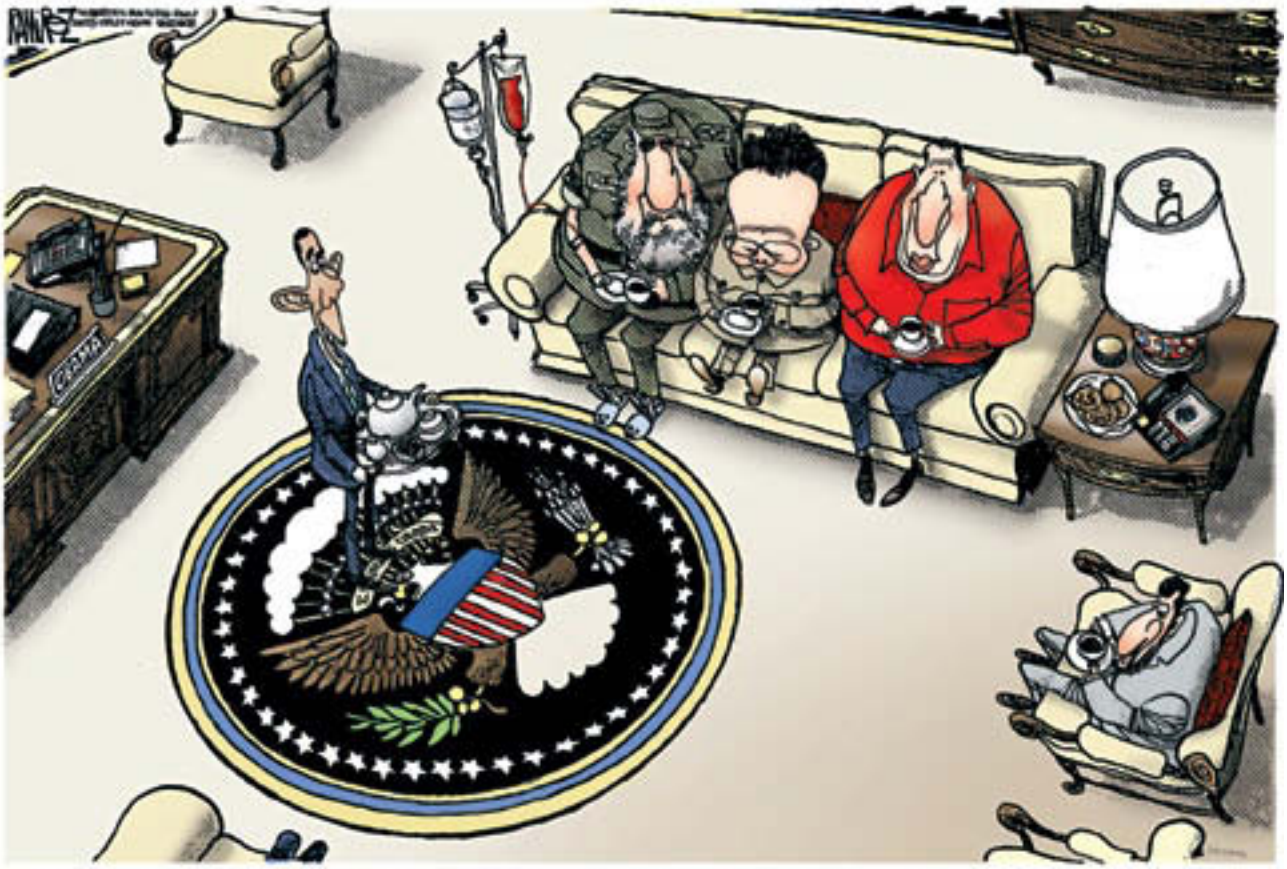
like Kant's categorical imperative that requires each person, without appealing to God, to act only on a universal idea, not one that favors himself or promotes his own interest over others. But how does this work in practice? Has Germany, the country of Kant, been a paragon of justice in the world since Kant fashioned his theory? More pointedly, has not the atheist totalitarianism of the twentieth century, with its universal pretensions, proved to be the worst tyranny mankind has ever seen?

There was an Epicurean atheism in the ancient world quite different from ours today. That atheism also uncovered tyranny behind the mask of religion, but it was content to point out the power of injustice. Injustice in this view was the way of the world, and there was no remedy for it. The only recourse for a reasonable person was to stay out of politics and live a life of pleasure, seeking calm, watching storms of the sea from ashore, and suppressing one's indignation at injustice.

Today's atheism rejects this serene attitude and goes on the attack. In its criticisms of God it claims to be more moral than religion. But it cannot do this without becoming just as heated, thus just as susceptible to fanaticism, as religion. Today's atheism shows the power of our desire for justice, a fact underestimated by the Epicurean pleasure-lovers. But it ignores the power of injustice, which was the Epicurean insight. Atheists today angrily hold religion to a standard of justice that the most advanced thinkers of our time, the postmoderns, have declared to be impossible. Some of those postmoderns, indeed, are so disgusted with the optimism of atheism that, with a shrug of their shoulders, they propose returning to the relative sanity of religion.

It is not religion that makes men fanatics; it is the power of the human desire for justice, so often partisan and perverted. That fanatical desire can be found in both religion and atheism. In the contest between religion and atheism, the strength of religion is to recognize two apparently contrary forces in the human soul: the power of injustice and the power, nonetheless, of our desire for justice. The stubborn existence of injustice reminds us that man is not God, while the demand for justice reminds us that we wish for the divine. Religion tries to join these two forces together.

The weakness of atheism, however, is to take account of only one of them, the fact of injustice in the case of Epicurean atheism or the desire for justice in our Enlightenment atheism. I conclude that philosophy today—and science too—need not only to tolerate and respect religion, but also to learn from it. ♦



Michael Ramirez

"I WOULD INVADE PAKISTAN, THEREBY UNDERMINING MUSHARRAF, BREEDING ISLAMIC MILITANCY AND DESTABILIZING A NUCLEAR POWER. MORE TEA ANYONE?"

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The Day the Emails Died

Bush will miss his aide Peter Wehner.

BY FRED BARNES

A unique chapter in White House history came to a conclusion last week. Call it the Wehner era, as in Peter Wehner, the director of the office of strategic initiatives. The title is misleading. Wehner ran a one-man think tank inside the White House (with a few young research assistants) that brought scholars and thinkers to talk to President Bush and that emailed ideas and information to several hundred journalists and writers and intellectuals and policy entrepreneurs. His missives became known as "Wehnergrams," but there will be no more of them. Friday, August 3, was his last day at the White House.

Wehner created his unique role in 2002 and made it an unusually influential one. His emails reflected not only the president's interests and initiatives but also Wehner's own, including matters of religious faith. Reporters and columnists, whether they liked or loathed Bush, found Wehner to be an indispensable source.

Having covered presidents going back to Gerald Ford, I've tried to think of a White House aide who came close to doing what Wehner did. And I've come up blank. Sure, there were staffers in past presidencies who kept in touch with the academic community and ones who specialized in talking to—and spinning, usually—columnists and commentators. But they had a narrow focus. Wehner had breadth, everything from monthly economic numbers to the anti-Bush ramblings of a prominent Anglican priest. His emails reached 1,100 recipients, most but nowhere near all of them folks with Republican or conservative sympathies.

Here's how Wehner described his audience to me: "Members of Congress, theologians, academics, political reporters, columnists, Sunday television talk show hosts, think tank scholars, bloggers, political activists, historians, cabinet secretaries, economists." He also emailed "pastors of churches I've attended," friends, and even "people in my Bible study."

At a reception on July 31, White House chief of staff Josh Bolten called Wehner the head, ears, lips, spleen, and heart of the president's team. His ears captured what the outside world, notably the intellectual community, was saying. His spleen? Wehner was often favored with the splenetic utterings of journalists. His heart was for explaining and defending Bush's concept of compassionate conservatism. Karl Rove added that Wehner had a spine. He never wavered.

He got in hot water at the White House only once—when he dispatched an email in 2004 that basically endorsed the so-called Pozen plan for Social Security reform. The plan would have limited growth in benefits for the well-to-do. His email was reported in the media and generated a short-lived controversy. Wehner had gotten out ahead of Bush, who months later spoke favorably of the plan.

Wehner liked to distribute good news about Iraq or the economy that had not received much press attention. A few weeks ago, he noted at the beginning of an email, "I realize that in some quarters these days pessimism is *de rigueur*, so at the risk of sounding out-of-step, I wanted to highlight some noteworthy economic and cultural data points from this past week."

Some of his most effective and politically mischievous emails contrasted what critics of Bush were saying now with what they'd said earlier. Al Gore was a particular victim. So were a number of columnists. And he occasionally passed along criticism of himself. After Wehner zinged a foreign policy speech by John Edwards, Joe Klein of *Time* wrote that Wehner had been "selling his usual brand of Kool-Aid." Wehner circulated Klein's piece with the comment: "I guess I'm the leader of the Kool-Aid Patrol. Cool. Plus, I need to do penance."

The sessions with intellectuals and academics he organized for the president were not limited to conservative scholars. In March 2006, he recruited David Kennedy of Stanford, James Ceaser of the University of Virginia, David Hackett Fischer of Brandeis, John Lewis Gaddis of Yale, and historian Gertrude Himmelfarb for a discussion with Bush.

Wehner, 46, never flagged in his support for the war in Iraq. On the final Sunday night of his White House tenure, he checked the online edition of Monday's *New York Times*, spotted the pro-Iraq "surge" piece by Brookings Institution scholars Michael O'Hanlon and Ken Pollack, and by shortly after midnight had sent the article to his email list. He labeled it "a significant and possibly climate-changing *New York Times* op-ed on Iraq." And indeed it was.

He will now join the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington as a senior fellow. In his farewell letter to Bush—who nicknamed him "Petie" and "Pedro"—Wehner said that however he and others served the president, "courage is what he has brought to us."

No doubt the president will miss Wehner enormously. I suspect he will be missed at least as much by the readers of his emails. Even if they didn't agree with him or Bush, they knew they were hearing from a remarkable and intellectually honest man who played a role at the White House we're unlikely to see duplicated. ♦

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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The Arsenal of the Iraq Insurgency

It's made in China.

BY JOHN J. TKACIK JR.

This year, many truckloads of small arms and explosives direct from Chinese government-owned factories to the Iranian Revolutionary Guards have been transshipped to Iraq and Afghanistan, where they are used against American soldiers and Marines and NATO forces. Since April, according to a knowledgeable Bush administration official, "vast amounts" of Chinese-made large caliber sniper rifles, "millions of rounds" of ammunition, rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs), and "IED [improvised explosive device] components" have been convoyed from Iran into Iraq and to the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Secretary of Defense Robert Gates insists there is "no evidence as yet" that Tehran government officials are involved in shipping weapons to Iraq for use against U.S. forces, a judgment that seems to hinge on the view that the Revolutionary Guards are not part of the "government." But the administration source cautioned, "these are Revolutionary Guards trucks, and although we can't see the mullahs at the wheel, you can bet this is [Tehran] government-sanctioned."

In addition, in early June the *Washington Times* reported from Kabul that the Pentagon had evidence of new shipments of Chinese shoulder-fired HN-5 antiaircraft missiles reaching Taliban units in Afghanistan's Kandahar province. This shouldn't be surprising. The Pentagon has known since last August that the Iranian Revolutionary Guards had supplied Chinese-made C-802 antiship missiles with advanced antijamming countermeasures to Hezbollah in Lebanon. One slammed into the Israeli destroyer *Hanit* killing four sailors on July 14, 2006, during the Lebanon war.

The amount of raw intelligence on these Chinese arms shipments to Iran is growing, according to the official, who has seen it. Some items show Iran has made "urgent" requests for "vast amounts" of Chinese-made sniper rifles, apparently exact copies of the Austrian-made Steyr-Mannlicher HS50 which the Vienna government approved for sale to Iran's National Iranian Police Organization in 2004 (ostensibly to help customs officers police Iran's long and sparsely populated mountainous borders). At the time, the United States and Great Britain glowered at the Austrian government and slapped a two-year sales ban on Steyr-Mannlicher. Then in February, as if to confirm the worst suspicions, U.S. troops in Iraq uncovered caches of about 100 of the sniper weapons that looked like the Austrian rifles, the *Daily Telegraph* reported.

U.S. officials in Baghdad told reporters that at least 170 U.S. and British soldiers had been killed by well-trained and heavily armed snipers. On June 22, for example, an Army specialist was struck by a sniper as he climbed out of his Abrams tank during Operation Bull Run in Al Duraiya. Earlier that morning, the same sniper shot out the tank's thermal sights. He was "probably the most skilled sniper we've seen down here," the soldier's platoon leader told National Public Radio.

But were the Iraqi snipers indeed using Austrian-made armor-piercing .50 caliber weapons?

Perhaps not. There was little official American reaction to the discovery of the sniper rifle cache in February. In March, Steyr-Mannlicher claimed that U.S. authorities had yet to ask it for help in tracing the weapons, a simple matter of checking serial numbers, or even letting Austrian technicians examine the rifles. The Americans never approached the Austrian firearms firm. On March 29, Vienna's *Wiener Zeitung* quoted U.S. Central Command spokesman Scott Miller as admitting, "No Austrian weapons have been found in Iraq."

Upon hearing this, Steyr-Mannlicher owner Franz Holzschuh noted that the patents on the HS .50 expired "years ago," and they were being counterfeited all over the world. A quick Google search for "sniper rifles" confirms that China South Industries' AMR-2 12.7mm antimateriel rifle is a good replica of the HS .50.

In fact, Iran's Revolutionary Guards had placed large orders for Chinese sniper rifles, among other things. According to the administration official, U.S. intelligence picked up urgent messages from Iranian customers to Chinese arms factories pleading that the shipments were needed "quickly" and specifying that the "serial numbers are to be removed." The Chinese vendors, according to the intelligence, were only too happy to comply. The Chinese also suggested helpfully that the shipments be made directly from China to Iran by cargo aircraft "to minimize the possibility that the shipments will be interdicted."

According to sources who have seen the intel reports, the evidence of China-Iran arms deliveries is overwhelming. This is not a case of ambiguous intelligence. The intelligence points to Chinese government complicity in the Iranian shipments of Chinese small arms to Iraqi insurgents.

Yet top State Department and National Security Council officials prefer to believe that the relationship between Chinese government-owned

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and operated arms exporters and Iranian terrorists is "unofficial." Therefore, they ought not make too much out of it, lest the Chinese government be unhelpful with the North Koreans. This is the "China exception" at work; it pervades both the intelligence and national security bureaucracies. Moreover, there is a belief in some circles in the administration and on Capitol Hill that Iran's government can be "negotiated" with and therefore the activities of Tehran's Revolutionary Guards must not be seen as reflecting Iranian government policy.

Of course, it is inconceivable that the Iranian Revolutionary Guards send convoys of newly minted Chinese weapons into Iraq and Afghanistan without the clear intention of killing U.S. troops there. And it is equally inconceivable that the Chinese People's Liberation Army facilitates these shipments from its own factories and via its own air bases without the same outcome in mind. If, however, the shipments are occurring against the wishes of Beijing—if the Chinese central government cannot control the behavior of its own army—then the situation is dire indeed: How can anyone expect Beijing to restrain shipments of even more destructive weapons (missiles, submarines, torpedoes, nuclear weapons components) to rogue states? It is a prospect that U.S. officials simply cannot handle.

After leaks of this alarming intelligence surfaced in Bill Gertz's "Inside the Ring" column in the *Washington Times*, top Pentagon officials began to acknowledge the troubling truth behind them. On July 22, Agence France-Presse quoted the top U.S. military spokesman in Baghdad, Rear Admiral Mark I. Fox, as acknowledging: "There are missiles that are actually manufactured in China that we assess come through Iran" in order to arm groups fighting U.S.-led forces.

Deputy Undersecretary of Defense Richard Lawless told the *Financial Times* on July 7 that the United States has "become increasingly alarmed that Chinese armor-piercing ammunition has been used by the Taliban in Afghanistan and insurgents in Iraq." The *FT* quoted one unnamed U.S. official as saying that the United States would like China to "do a better job of policing these sales," as if China actually wanted to "police" its arms exports.

Austrian sniper rifle (bottom); Chinese knock-off (top)

Lawless, revered in the Pentagon as a steely-eyed China skeptic, evinced less agnosticism to the *FT*, explaining that the country of origin was less important than who was facilitating the transfer. One might wonder why Beijing, as a matter of policy, would sell weapons to Iran for the clear purpose of killing American soldiers. "There is a great shortfall in our understanding of China's intentions," said Lawless of China's overall military policies, and "when you don't know why they are doing it, it is pretty damn threatening. . . . They leave us no choice but to assume the worst."

Why China is "doing it" need not be a mystery. In 2004, Beijing's top America analyst, Wang Jisi, noted, "The facts have proven that it is beneficial for our international environment to have the United States militarily and diplomatically deeply sunk in the Mideast to the extent that it can hardly extricate itself." It is sobering to consider that China's small-arms proliferation behavior since then suggests that this principle is indeed guiding Chinese foreign policy.

Beijing's strategists learned much from their collaboration with Washington during the 1980s, when the two powers prosecuted a successful decade-long campaign to drive the Soviet Union out of Afghanistan. The trick is to avoid a head-to-head confrontation with your adversary while getting insurgents to keep him tied down and taking advantage of his distraction to pursue your interests elsewhere. The cynical difference is that in the Afghan war of the 1980s, the U.S.-supported mujahedeen killed tens of thousands of Soviet troops, while in the early 21st century, Iranian (and Chinese)-supported insurgents in Afghanistan and Iraq are mostly killing Afghans and Iraqis.

The "China exception" notwithstanding, the ease with which Chinese state-owned munitions industries export vast quantities of small arms to violence-prone and war-ravaged areas—from Iraq and Afghanistan to Darfur—leaves no room to doubt that the Chinese government pursues this behavior as a matter of state policy. A regime with $1.3 trillion in foreign exchange reserves cannot claim that it "needs the money" and so turns a blind eye to dangerous exports by its own military. But until the scales fall from the eyes of Washington's diplomats and geopoliticians and they see China's cynical global strategy for what it is, few of the globe's current crises are likely to be resolved in America's—or democracy's—favor.

In particular, U.S. soldiers and Iraqi and Afghan civilians will continue to be killed by Chinese weapons. ♦

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Center Fold?

Democrats turn on their moderates.

BY TOD LINDBERG

There's no obvious way to measure such a thing, but as a matter of intuition, you'd have to say that the most hated people in America today are sensible Democrats. The hard-core partisans of the Democratic left have never had a bigger megaphone than they now have on the Internet, and while they are united in the view that George W. Bush is public enemy No. 1, with Alberto Gonzales and Karl Rove alternating in the No. 2 slot, what really pumps up the volume is any sign of deviationism on their own side.

This is an especially acute problem for the Democratic foreign policy establishment—the people who will actually be staffing a Clinton or Obama administration at the National Security Council, the State Department, and the Pentagon. Whether you agree with them on policy or not, they are serious people who recognize they're going to have to deal with the world as it is. Unfortunately, this sensibility often runs afoul of the netroots view that the world flowed with milk and honey until Bush ruined everything.

When Michael O'Hanlon and Kenneth Pollack of the Brookings Institution travel to Iraq and report on the *New York Times* op-ed page that conditions there are improving, they aren't doing so in order to give aid and comfort to the Bush administration, but because as a defense expert and regional expert respectively, that's what they are seeing. Nevertheless, they were flayed alive by angry left-wing bloggers, who challenged everything from their qualifications to their competence to their honesty to their eyesight.

The policy and political headquarters for sensible Democrats has long been the Democratic Leadership Council, which was founded in response to Walter Mondale's massive defeat running as an orthodox liberal against Ronald Reagan in 1984. The DLC was closely associated with Bill Clinton's 1992 campaign as a "New Democrat"—a centrist candidate, that is, who was not beholden to the party's traditional constituencies. Only by moving to the center, such key DLC figures as Al From and Bruce Reed argued, could Democrats expect to achieve national majorities.

A sure sign that you are in the fever swamps of partisan politics is that "final nail" locution: The blogger at Daily Kos so wants the DLC dead that she will pronounce it dead whether or not that makes the slightest bit of sense.

The DLC had its annual "National Conversation" late last month in Nashville, and the headline was who didn't show: namely, any of the candidates vying for the Democratic presidential nomination. Why not? Maybe because, as Noam Scheiber put it in another *New York Times* op-ed, the DLC is now "radioactive" for the Democratic mainstream and especially its netroots agitators. Long ago, Daily Kos founder Markos Moulitsas pronounced a *fatwa* on the DLC and all its works, and his hostility to any suggestion that the left wing of the party needs to tone it down a bit for national consumption is now ubiquitous.

It's certainly shared by Scheiber, who bade to offer a eulogy for the DLC: "Two decades of work by the Democratic Leadership Council—and a not inconsiderable assist from President Bush—have made the Democratic Party the healthiest it has been in the 22 years of the council's existence. Democrats should thank the group and then tell it that it's no longer needed." Blogger Susan S at the Daily Kos (where antipathy toward the *New Republic*, Scheiber's employer, occasionally reaches the level of its disgust for the DLC) celebrated his piece under the headline, "Noam Scheiber Puts the Final Nail in the DLC Coffin."

A sure sign that you are in the fever swamps of partisan politics is that "final nail" locution: The blogger at Daily Kos so wants the DLC dead that she will pronounce it dead whether or not that makes the slightest bit of sense. Which, of course, it doesn't. The idea that the DLC is dead, or for that matter that it will happily go away in response to being told "it's no longer needed," is just fantasy.

It's obviously true that the Democratic party is on a roll, feisty, and reveling in its own success. And no one can dispute that the number of Democrats willing to call themselves "liberals" has been on the rise, in step with a decline in the percentage of Democrats who call themselves moderate or centrist. Seven years in opposition to a president you have regarded as illegitimate from the outset will indeed increase partisan solidarity, which in turn reduces the need for internal differentiation, such as between "New Democrats" and old. Put it this way: If you're a Democrat and the administration of

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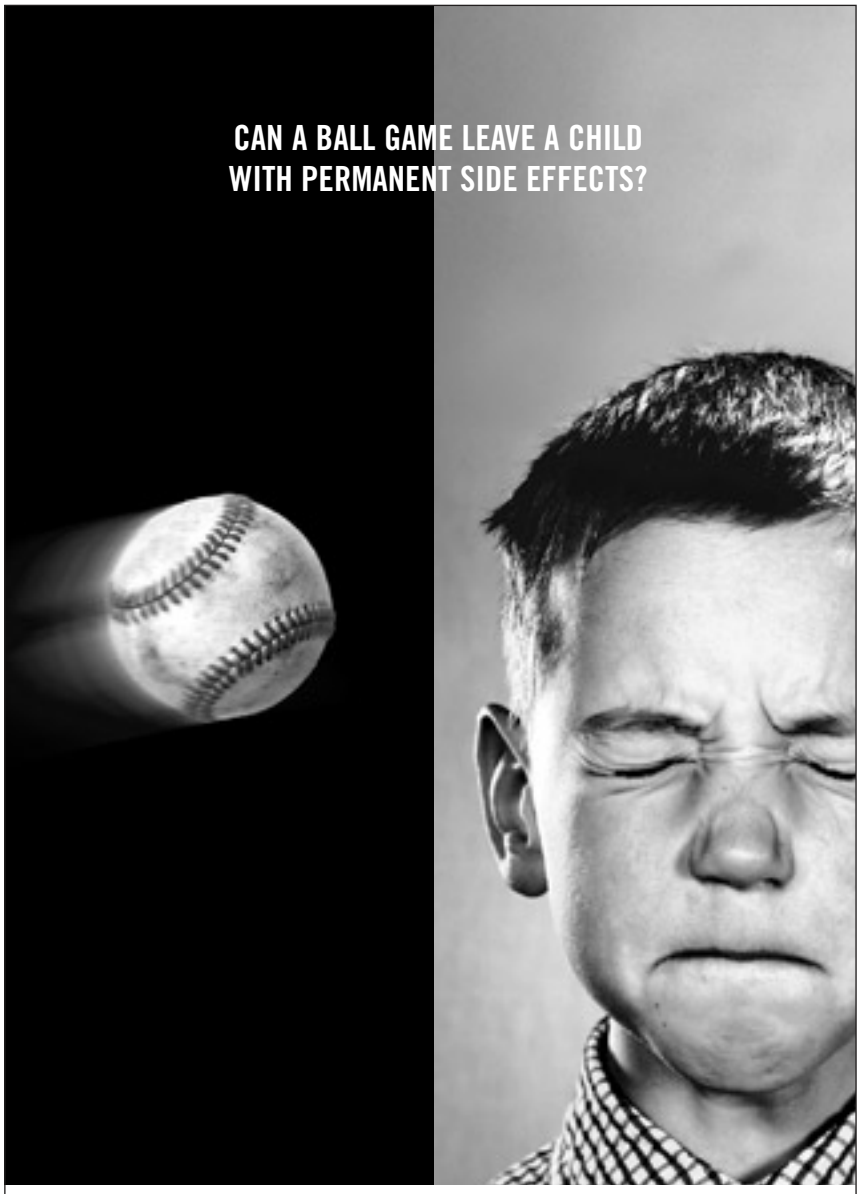
George W. Bush hasn't brought out your inner liberal, nothing will.

Unlike Daily Kos, Scheiber understands that the DLC has had something to do with the current success of the Democratic party. Yes, Democrats, left to themselves, will increase taxes and spending both, as well as regulation of the economy. They will dream glorious dreams about getting rid of guns. But as a practical matter, and thanks in large part to the DLC centrists, they will do none of these things to the same extent a Mondale administration would have—which is, as the DLC says, the reason there was no Mondale administration.

When Bill Clinton said in 1996, "The era of big government is over," he didn't mean that the era of small or even shrinking government had begun, but he did mean that massive new bureaucratic "solutions" to social problems were no longer on the agenda, and they have remained off ever since, relegated to Democratic fantasies about a better world with no Republicans in it.

Democrats have been in a triumphalist mood before: in 1993-1994, when they were in control of both chambers of Congress and the White House. In its grip, the early Clinton administration lost its connection with the "New Democrat" agenda of the campaign. The political strategy was not bipartisanship but a reliance on the Democratic congressional majorities to produce the votes necessary to enact legislation. And besides the tax increases and "stimulus package" of spending, the most prominent item on the administration's agenda was a health care reform that looked all too massive and bureaucratic.

If Democrats conclude they don't need to reach to the center any more, they will be behaving just as foolishly as they did 14 years ago, and as House Republicans did in 2005-06, when most all the legislative action seemed focused on buttering up social conservatives. Understanding this has been the specialty of the DLC for two decades, and Democrats still need it. ♦



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A Club Taiwan Can't Join

The U.N. breaks its own rules—again.

BY GARY SCHMITT

Membership in the United Nations is supposed to be "open to all . . . peace-loving states which accept the obligations contained" in the U.N. Charter, as the selfsame charter puts it. In a rational world, a country with the world's 18th largest economy, which is formally and diplomatically recognized by other member states and is a practicing liberal democracy, would be a slam dunk for membership. But of course the U.N.'s history is replete with resolutions and decisions that are at odds with its own charter and lofty goals. So, to no one's surprise, the Republic of China (Taiwan) has been denied membership in that august body for the 15th year in a row.

But this year was different. In mid-July, President Chen Shui-bian submitted the application letter under the name "Taiwan" instead of "Republic of China." The ostensible reason for doing so was that, having failed repeatedly in the past with the moniker ROC, it was thought best to try something new, using the name now commonly employed by both the people of Taiwan and much of the globe when talking about the self-governing island. The real reason for the switch of course was President Chen's desire to reaffirm to his constituents at home and to the wider world his view that Taiwan is in fact an independent, sovereign entity that is distinct from mainland China.

Within days, President Chen had his answer. Not only did the U.N. Secretariat reject the application, but new secretary-general Ban Ki-moon defended the decision by citing U.N. Resolution 2758, saying that it stipulated that "the government of China is the sole and legitimate government and the position of the United Nations is that Taiwan is part of China." But that 1971 resolution, which was intended to expel the Republic of China from the U.N., give its permanent seat on the Security Council to the People's Republic of China, and to "recognize" the Communist regime in Beijing "as the only legitimate representatives of China to the United Nations," said nothing at all about Taiwan being part of China.

Bettmann / Corbis

Putting aside the fact that passage of the resolution itself—by a simple majority vote of the General Assembly—was a violation of the U.N.'s own rules for addressing such questions, U.N. Resolution 2758 did not deal with the issue of Taiwan. Indeed, as a matter of history and international law, the San Francisco Peace Treaty—the 1951 accord signed by 49 states formally ending the war with Japan—explicitly left open "the future status of Taiwan." And to this day it has not been formally settled. As recently as this summer, the State Department allowed that, as far as the U.S. government was concerned, the PRC is "the sole legal government of China, [but] we have not formally recognized Chinese sovereignty over Taiwan." Unless Secretary-General Ban has now taken on a second job as a foreign policy spokesman for China, he has exceeded his brief in conflating the question of who represents China at the U.N. with the status of Taiwan.

There is in fact no good reason for Taiwan or, if one prefers, the Republic of China, not to be a member of the United Nations. Certainly, the U.N. is no stranger to figuring out ways to accommodate membership for states with complicated or even dubious sovereignty issues. From the start, for example, the Soviet Union insisted that Ukraine and Byelorussia, today's Belarus, have votes in the General Assembly along with its own, despite the fact that both republics were clearly governed by and from Moscow. Or take India, a member even before its formal split with Britain.

More recently, prior to unification, the U.N. saw two Germanys, the Federal Republic of the West and the East's German Democratic Republic, holding separate seats in the assembly. Even today, there are two Koreas, divided as Germany once was, not because of some inherent distinction but because of the reality of conquering armies and foreign occupations. Taiwan has a far stronger case that it has an identity apart from the mainland than either the divided Germany had or the two Koreas have today. And again, as a state that is recognized by other member states, under international law the Republic of China has sovereign status, regardless of whether Washington has formal diplomatic relations with Taipei.

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Perhaps the strongest advocate for employing diplomatic legerdemain at the U.N. on behalf of the ROC was President Bush's father, former president and U.N. ambassador George Herbert Walker Bush. Trying to head off a vote on Resolution 2758, Ambassador Bush put forward a U.S. proposal for "dual representation," with the PRC taking the Security Council seat, while leaving the ROC with a place in the General Assembly. Bush argued that "we face a reality, not a theory. Our proper concern must be to do justice to the complex reality that exists today in the form of effective governing entities"—that is, the PRC and the ROC.

However, giving the people of Taiwan their due seems to be the last thing on anyone's mind these days. Rather, placating Beijing by letting it dictate what is acceptable and what is not when it comes to Taiwan's international personality is the order of the day. Yet doing so only reinforces in China's mind that it can get away with bullying Taiwan every chance it gets—which in turn feeds Taiwan's need to push back, if for no other reason than national self-respect.

Even the Kuomintang, the main opposition in Taiwan to President Chen's Democratic Progressive party and the party most open to some sort of official reconciliation with the mainland, is supporting initiatives seeking U.N. membership. And the reason is pretty straightforward. In today's Taiwan, if you want to win an election, you have to show you care about maintaining the country's sovereignty. Until Washington understands that dynamic, it will continually be taken by surprise by the democratic politics of Taiwan. And unless Washington begins to take a more assertive position in helping Taiwan find its space on the international stage, it can count on being caught up in a cycle of Taiwan Strait crises that are getting no less dangerous for all involved.

Perhaps a good, first step in breaking this cycle would be for the folks at Foggy Bottom to make clear to the new secretary-general that a "clarification" by him is in order. ♦

It's Still the Economy, Stupid

Nervous markets aren't the whole story.

BY IRWIN M. STELZER

Hank Paulson

ChinaFotoPress / GAMMA

A market spasm. Repricing of credit risk. Liquidity crunch. Those are some of the terms traders are using to describe the turmoil in financial markets. Frank Sinatra said it better, "The party's over." Note: Normal life resumes after a party, so Frank had it right.

The collapse of a third Bear Stearns hedge fund last week simply added to the unhappiness on Wall Street and most world financial markets, and gave reporters on CNBC an opportunity to shout "fire" in a crowded studio. Traders and investors are rediscovering that it is indeed risky to lend money to people who are unlikely to be able to repay their loans. They are learning that bundling high-risk loans into large packages does not somehow elevate the loans to AAA rating.

They are learning, too, that not every stock that looks like a takeover candidate will be snapped up at a substantial premium by some private equity firm. The gusher of unlimited credit that flowed into the coffers of the private-equity firms has slowed to a trickle. Suddenly, some of the deals that the market had been anticipating are just too expensive to consummate profitably. So the premium built into the shares of takeover candidates disappears, and with it the hopes and dreams of those who bought their shares without regard to the fundamental earning capacity of the company.

All of this has rattled some consumers. Forget that the underlying economy is sound. Media tales abound of canceled vacations, home-buying deferred, ripples that will become waves and swamp families struggling to keep their heads above water in the age of $3 gasoline.

Throw in tales of high-paying jobs lost to $1-a-day Chinese laborers—never mind that Beijing's biggest problem is pollution from Mercedes and Rolls Royces—and the Bush

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administration finds itself beleaguered on two fronts. On the foreign policy front it finds itself trying to persuade voters that the situation on the ground in Iraq is improving, and that the vacation bookings of the Iraqi parliament are irrelevant to the outcome of the war against al Qaeda.

At home, the administration seems unable to take James Carville's pithy slogan, "It's the economy, stupid," and hurl it back at the Democrats who are crying about tax breaks for the rich (of which there are some), and the plight of the poor (who are in fact becoming steadily better off). A new *Wall Street Journal*/NBC poll finds that nearly two-thirds of Americans think we are in the midst of a recession right now, or will be in such a downturn in the next year. True, the administration did assemble its economic team of Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson, Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers Ed Lazear, Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez, and (departing) Director of the Office of Management and Budget Rob Portman to say before CNBC's cameras that all is well. But a daytime broadcast to a limited audience is no antidote to the drumbeat of gloom emanating from the multiple candidates for the Democratic presidential nomination. My guess is that far more people saw, and were affected by, images of John Edwards touring the poorer neighborhoods of America.

Why the administration can't get its story out is something of a mystery. Because it has a decent story to tell—not a perfect one, and not one that can show an economy without problems, but one that voters might, just might, find a reasonable offset to the bad news bears on the left.

Speaking of bears, let's spend a moment on the stock market—you know, the one that is in the process of imploding. Or is it? There is little doubt that problems in the subprime mortgage market are tightening credit. There is also little doubt that what Paulson calls "excesses . . . loans that have been done without traditional covenants" and other sillinesses are now being sweated out, and not without pain for the overly optimistic.

But before reaching for the panic button, consider this. The past disastrous week has driven share prices so far down that the S&P index of 500 stocks is "only" some 12 percent above where it was at this time last year. Much more important—and here we can rely on Paulson as a man who knows something about the real economy as well as its Wall Street reflection—is the strength of the underlying economy. Paulson, no shill for the administration, which needs him far more than he needs his current job, puts it this way, "I've received a fair amount of questions about volatility, market moves, those kinds of things, and I always start with looking at the underlying economic strength of the global economy and a very, very healthy U.S. economy."

Why the administration can't get its story out is something of a mystery. Because it has a decent story to tell—not a perfect one, but one that voters might find a reasonable offset to the bad news bears.

The U.S. economy is proving to be a resilient, flexible machine. Despite the very real problems in the housing market, the economy is providing jobs for just about everyone who wants to work. The unemployment rate remains a low 4.6 percent, the economy created an average of 136,000 new jobs every month this year, and 40 of the 50 states have unemployment rates below the average for the '80s and '90s, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The economy grew at the highly satisfactory rate of 3.4 percent in the last quarter. Workers' compensation has been growing in real terms, while inflation is contained, running at 2 percent or lower, and profits remain satisfactory. The world economy is growing at something like an annual rate of 5 percent. David Hale, an economic consultant, points out that the growth rates of 120 countries will exceed 4 percent this year; economist John Makin puts it more colorfully: "Since 2004, the global economy has caught fire." That development, long in coming, combines with a weaker dollar to stimulate exports and reduce our trade deficit.

And house prices are not collapsing, although you'd never know it from media reports. Yes, some borrowers are finding they can't meet the payments as interest rates on their adjustable rate mortgages move up. Yes, house prices seem to be softening, although data are too imperfect to permit firm conclusions. And, yes, we don't know when the housing market will recover. But prices have a long way to drop before all of the gains realized in the past four or five years are wiped out. Unless you think of a house as a commodity to be traded every day like pork bellies or oil futures, most home owners have no reason to lose sleep.

None of this means that there are not important policy issues that need attention, or that the economy might not slow as consumers make the desirable transition to a somewhat higher savings rate. America needs a tax structure that is efficient and allows our firms to compete with overseas rivals that are steadily cutting taxes; a system for allowing the deserving workers displaced by trade to retrain or retire; a health care system that increases the availability of care by detaching insurance from the job, and increases the range of individual choice and competition; and an energy policy that is more than a grab bag of gifts to vested interests.

As politicians like to say when they don't quite know how to solve the problems of which they complain, "There is work still to be done." One of those chores is to enable the American people to balance the daily doses of bad news with the larger fact of good news. Too bad the Bushies can't figure out how to do that. ♦

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The Other Man from Hope

Mike Huckabee, the likable longshot in the Republican presidential race

By Terry Eastland

Muscatine, Iowa

Here in this small but engaging river city, known for its watermelons and sunsets, Mike Huckabee, the former governor of Arkansas and now a candidate for the Republican presidential nomination, wants the two dozen Iowans seated around him in Green's Tea and Coffee to know that he's "leading" in the polls. This is startling news, since Huckabee has never polled above single digits in any survey. But Huckabee proceeds to explain. He cites the AP's interpretation of a recent Associated Press-Ipsos poll saying that no top-tier candidate—not Rudy Giuliani or John McCain or Mitt Romney or Fred Thompson—did better than "none of the above." Pausing, Huckabee announces, "Well, ladies and gentlemen, I am 'none of the above.'"

Laughter fills the spacious room at Green's Tea, which offers a splendid view of the Mississippi. The crowd warms to the Arkansan, and you can see why Huckabee gets high marks for "likability." This asset is not lost on his aides, one of whom came up with a bumper sticker declaring, "I Like Mike." It's an inspired choice. Not only do you have rhyme, but the three words echo the slogan of a Republican (Dwight D. Eisenhower, in case you asked) whose nickname was "Ike." Mike, of course, would like to be like Ike, who was twice elected president.

The poll Huckabee cites doesn't really bear the interpretation that the wire service gave it. "None of the above" was not an actual option someone could pick, but "don't know" and "not sure" and "none" were, and the percentage of Republicans choosing those options, which the AP story added up and characterized as favoring "none of the above," was the largest. Presumably, if the pollsters had pushed respondents on which way they were leaning, more would have named a candidate.

Be that as it may, the AP-Ipsos poll, when compared with an earlier one, does suggest more uncertainty among Republicans regarding who their nominee should be, and Huckabee would take that as a sign of what he says he sees on the campaign trail—increasing dissatisfaction among Republican voters with the top-tier candidates. Indeed, Huckabee believes, as he proceeds to tell the crowd here at Green's Tea, that there is a "crisis in our Republican party." By that he means "people are confused as to why it is we are Republicans and what it is we are supposed to do to get elected." Huckabee makes this point everywhere he goes, and this warm sunny day in late July finds him, after Muscatine, in Washington, Ottumwa, and Mt. Pleasant.

In an interview aboard his rented Winnebago, Huckabee—who is 51, has been married to Janet for 33 years, and has three grown children—says his strategy is to stay in the race as long as it takes for the party to figure out its "purpose and direction" and realize that the top-tier candidates would disappoint as president and that he is the best choice. "I know deep down that I meet the criteria for what I think the Republican base is looking for in a candidate and frankly what the American people are looking for in a president."

Iowa, which Huckabee has visited more often than any other state, certainly offers an opportunity for the GOP to come to its senses, in Huckabeean terms, and start showing, well, its liking for Mike. On August 11, as many as 30,000 Iowa Republicans will gather in Ames on the campus of Iowa State University and vote for the person they'd like to see as their party's nominee. This is the Republicans' straw poll, which George W. Bush won the last time it was conducted, in 1999. The results offer an early measure of organizational strength and candidate appeal, and past winners have almost always prevailed in the caucus, held in January. Huckabee says he doesn't have to win at Ames, but he does have to show "a level of momentum building." He has been reported as saying he needs to finish at least

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in fourth place. With John McCain and Rudy Giuliani having decided not to participate in the straw poll, fourth place seems within reach, since, assuming a first place finish by Mitt Romney, as most political observers do, Huckabee would be competing for one of three places with Sam Brownback, Duncan Hunter, Ron Paul, Tom Tancredo, and Tommy Thompson.

But Huckabee envisions a scenario in which even fifth place would be okay—"if fifth is not much different from fourth and second is not much different from fifth." In other words, if the second, third, fourth, and fifth-place finishers are bunched together—and also, Huckabee adds, if, in their bunching, they are not very far behind the man in first. What Huckabee wants is a finish strong enough "for me to go to donors and say there is a reason to contribute to this campaign." And thus to keep him in the race.

Huckabee knows that he may not do well enough to raise the money for a campaign that so far has reported $1.3 million in contributions—dwarfed by the $35.4 million reported by Giuliani and the $34.5 million by Romney (and that doesn't include Romney's own contributions to himself). But should Huckabee fail on his own terms at Ames, that wouldn't necessarily constitute a rejection of his message, he says. It could mean that "we just didn't have the resources" to do much better. In any case, it would spell an end to a campaign that from the beginning has been a long shot.

Huckabee is, as you'd expect him to be, optimistic about his prospects. The crowds have been good, he says, with positive reaction afterwards. "People are saying, 'I'll be there at Ames, I'm with you, you're the guy I'm going to support.'" Aides say that Huckabee is gaining support in heavily Republican northwest Iowa and also in places in the northeast. He has moved up a bit in recent polls, and the RealClearPolitics Average (which includes the unannounced Fred Thompson) shows him now in fifth place in Iowa, with 3.8 percent. That's low, very low, but still better than the 1 or 2 percent most second-tier candidates are pulling. And one of the polls used in the RCP Average is Mason-Dixon, whose June survey had Huckabee ahead of John McCain, 7 percent to 6 percent.

Huckabee has written—"every word of it," he told me—*From Hope to Higher Ground*, one of those books in which a politician tests out an idea, in this case "restoring America's greatness," as the subtitle says. By "America's greatness" Huckabee means a great America, one of hope and optimism, of generational improvement in both material and moral terms. On the stump he describes the great America that was his growing up in Hope, Arkansas: He was the first male "in my entire family ever to graduate high school," and he attributes his achievements to his parents, who, wanting "something better for me," worked multiple jobs, making "enormous sacrifices." That great America, however, is one that Huckabee believes has slipped away. And so, as he told a crowd of 60 assembled in Central Park in downtown Ottumwa, "I want us once again to believe that the greatest generation is not the generation that's already come but the generation that's not been born yet."

To become the greatness president, Huckabee will first have to win the nomination of his own party, and that can't happen, by his own reckoning, unless the GOP comes out of its fog. In our interview, I asked Huckabee about the party's confusion. "It's confused as to what happened last year and the shellacking we took at the polls." He says the war was only one factor, and the real reason was that "we lost touch with basic issues of governing." He cites "inattention" to public corruption and "utter incompetence as to . . . the simplest things government should do, such as getting bottles of water to people stranded on bridges on Interstate 10 in the aftermath of a hurricane [Katrina] and a flood." He points to a tendency to prefer "posturing" to governing, and he sees the failure to constrain spending as evidence of a party failing to live up to its own beliefs about governance.

To Republicans who ask whether "we were thrown out [of power] because we were too conservative or not conservative enough," Huckabee says that's the wrong question. "We weren't enough 'up.' We were way too much 'down.'" Here Huckabee is speaking in a vocabulary that assumes the listener is acquainted with what he calls "vertical governing," which is treated in his book and which he actually explains on the trail. It's a concept he defines with reference to his ten-and-a-half years as governor, in which capacity it was, as he said at Green's Tea, "not my luxury to just simply make speeches and tell people what to do. I had to do things. I was judged on whether or not the roads got better or worse, whether the schools got better or worse, whether jobs improved or declined, whether wages got better or worse, whether we took better care of our natural resources or didn't, whether taxes went up or down, whether the cost of government got better or worse. It's what I like to call 'vertical governing.' Because, quite frankly, the average American isn't that concerned about whether you are left or right, liberal or conservative, Democrat or Republican, even though I am unapologetically . . . to the right of center, probably to the right of most people in this room. But the point is . . . people want . . . vertical leadership, which they expect to lead up and not down. The net result of being elected is not to talk about what the right thing is but to do what's right."

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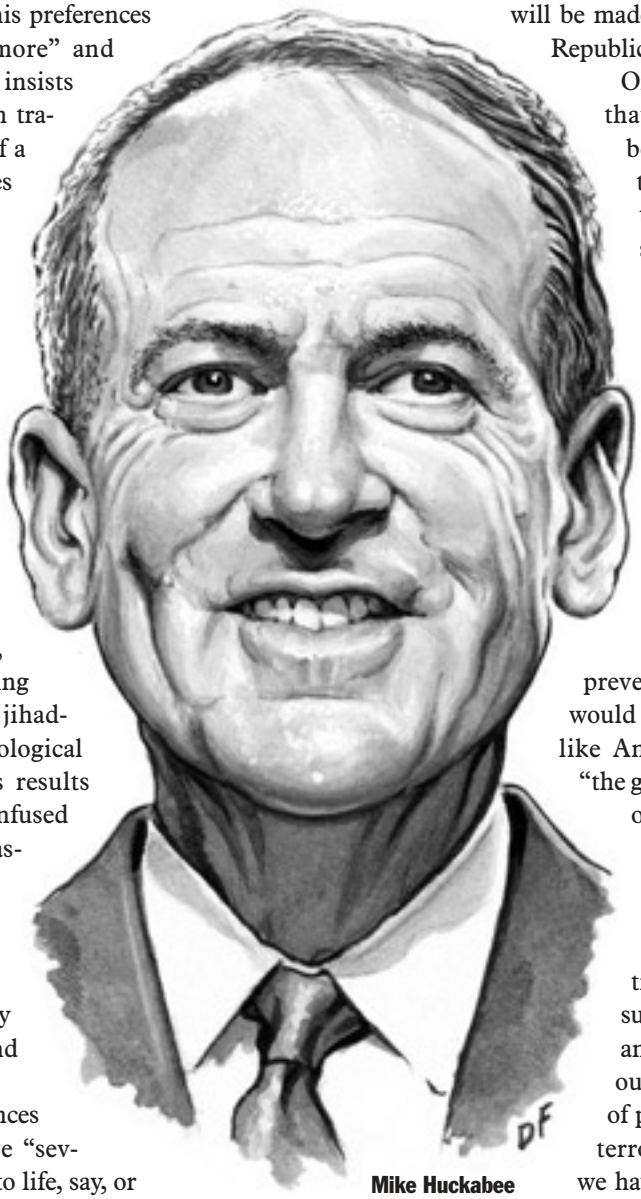
Huckabee is offering what might be called "results conservatism." The conservative part is fundamental because it identifies where governing, for him, must be grounded, in terms of philosophy and ideas. And as he makes his campaign stops, Huckabee takes care to assert his conservatism. He explains how, growing up in a very blue county, he became a conservative "by conviction" when he was a teenager. He states his preferences for "less government, not more" and "lower taxes, not higher." He insists on understanding marriage in traditional terms, as the union of a male and a female. He stresses the sanctity of human life and calls for protecting it from the moment of conception. He criticizes *Roe* v. *Wade* as having "imposed an unconstitutional concept of privacy" upon the country. He cites the Tenth Amendment as a bulwark against an overweening federal government. And he underscores that the "first job" of the president "is to protect the American people," which, he emphasizes, means protecting the country against "fanatic jihadists" who are waging "a theological war" against us. Huckabee's results conservatism is not to be confused with President Bush's compassionate conservatism. In fact, Huckabee rejects the latter term on the ground, as he told me, that compassion isn't a matter of political ideology but is related to "your spirit and heart."

Huckabee wants his audiences to know that he doesn't have "several different views" on right to life, say, or taxation or same-sex marriage. The implication is that some of his competitors do. But he doesn't name them. This is a soft approach, and it may not achieve, by August 11 in Ames, the "level of momentum building" necessary to raise the money he needs to stay in the race. In any event, Huckabee knows that he can't maintain that approach if he remains a candidate. At some point he will have to go after those running ahead of him. Because he stresses his pro-life credentials at every stop—"I didn't become pro-life because of politics; I got into politics because I'm pro-life"—I asked him whether he's prepared to make the argument that it would be wrong for a pro-life party to nominate a presidential candidate who is not pro-life, such as the current frontrunner, Rudy Giuliani. He said he will eventually be ready to challenge Giuliani on those grounds. "It's an inevitable argument. It will be made, if not by me, then by many Republican activists."



Mike Huckabee

Illustration by Drew Friedman

On specific issues, Huckabee says that the immigration bill failed because it didn't "take care of the first test of a real immigration policy, which is having a secure border." On energy, he declares that we need "to produce our own energy sources" and quit our dependence on foreign sources. On the No Child Left Behind law, he states his agreement with its general thrust and would make only minor changes. On health care, he argues that the country needs to shift from an intervention-based system to one based on prevention. On judges, he says he would appoint judicial conservatives like Antonin Scalia, whom he calls "the gold standard" for judging. And on the question of the Supreme Court's overruling *Roe*, he's emphatically for it.

On Iraq—a subject that generates only one or two questions at each event—Huckabee supports the surge, and opposes any timetable for pulling troops out, and he accuses Democrats of playing politics. On the war on terrorism more broadly, he says we have to be in it for the long run: "What people don't understand is what we're up against. . . . We're fighting people who don't care if it takes a thousand years. They've been at it for longer than that. A few hundred more years won't matter."

The one big idea Huckabee advances on the stump is the fair tax. Huckabee told me he became a fair-tax proponent after first being attracted to the flat

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tax. "But then I realized that the flat tax . . . was a tax on productivity, which is not the way you stimulate entrepreneurial activity." During his early campaigning in Iowa, he says, people asked him about the fair tax. "But I wasn't familiar with it." So he bought *The Fair Tax Book: Saying Goodbye to the Income Tax and the IRS* by Rep. John Lindner of Georgia and Neal Boortz, the Atlanta talk-show host. Huckabee says he read it twice and was persuaded. As he explains the concept in his speeches, the fair tax would replace all current taxes on productivity with a consumption tax of 23 percent on all goods and services (education being the lone exception). It would be so simple to administer, he says, that "a seven-year-old running a lemonade stand would be able to figure it out." We could eliminate the IRS, he adds, since the government no longer would collect taxes. "And"—an applause line—"April 15 would be just another spring day in America."

Huckabee doesn't shy from criticizing President Bush, especially his handling of Iraq. His mistakes include not sending in more troops at the outset. But the president's chief failure, Huckabee says, is one of rhetoric: "One of the most important roles a president plays is that of communicator in chief," and yet Bush has failed "to communicate very effectively" on not only Iraq but also other issues as well. That has weakened his ability to lead, in Huckabee's view, and to produce effective government. A classic case, he told me, was Bush's handling of embryonic stem cell research. The president failed to define the terms of debate, he says. Where the debate should have been over whether the government should fund the research, Huckabee says, it instead became one of whether you supported research and curing disease—the funding question aside.

Huckabee sees himself as excelling as a communicator. He has been a frequent guest on national talk shows, winning generally high marks for his appearances. In fact, he got into "communications" early in life and worked in a variety of speaking capacities before he ever ran for public office. At age 14 he took a job with a 1,000-watt radio station in Hope; he was sports editor during the week and a disc jockey on the weekend. At Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, where he finished in two years and three months with a degree in religion, he worked on-air 40 hours each week at a local radio station. After a year and a half at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, he left to become communications director for a ministry headed up by the evangelist James Robison. At the time, he was only 21.

In 1980 he returned to Arkansas and started a communications business. He was hoping to run for office eventually—"I had been a little political animal as a kid growing up." But Immanuel Baptist Church in Pine Bluff asked him to preach one Sunday, and Huckabee, who had been ordained while in college and served as pastor of a small Baptist church in Arkadelphia, agreed. He was asked back, and in a matter of months he was named interim pastor and then senior pastor. After six years at Immanuel, he became senior pastor of Beech Street First Baptist in Texarkana, a church of 2,500 members. He filled that pulpit for six years, too, leaving Beech Street to finally enter politics, as the Republican candidate for the U.S. Senate in 1992. He lost that race, but won his next, for lieutenant governor in 1993.

Huckabee became governor in 1996 when Jim Guy Tucker was forced to resign as a result of his conviction in Whitewater. Huckabee was reelected governor in 1998, winning the support of 48 percent of black voters, according to CNN's exit polls. Huckabee says he "got things done" as governor, working with an overwhelmingly Democratic legislature, because he went to the people of his state "to communicate why those things were important." He cites passage of legislation to fund an overhaul of interstate highways in Arkansas and of a bill ensuring clean air indoors, and enactment of an amendment defining marriage as the union of a man and a woman.

The rhetorical presidency, a subject studied by political scientists, is the basis for many Americans' understanding of the presidency. It's the presidency that takes place in public—in speeches and press conferences, television interviews, and the like. It's what the president says, and also—though to a lesser extent—what his aides say. Huckabee has identified this as a critical weakness of the Bush presidency and thinks he could do better. "I really believe our country needs leadership that can not only articulate something we believe in," he told me, "but get it done as well."

Huckabee has also set for himself a major task that would surely test the capability of his rhetorical presidency: passage of the fair tax. On the stump Huckabee talks about the length of the tax code—some 177,000 pages. Imagine how many interests would want to keep the code so long and, for that matter, so complicated, and also how many would want to keep the IRS in business. Huckabee has staked himself to an ambitious domestic policy goal, one worthy of a president.

Here in southeastern Iowa, three things about Huckabee stand out during my time with him. (There would be a fourth if he'd brought along his bass guitar and his band, Capital Offense, which plays "only songs people readily recognize . . . the hits people grew up with.") One is his apprehension about how voters may react to his being from Hope. There was, of course, another man from Hope, Arkansas, who became

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president of the United States. What are the odds of that happening again? Will Americans want it to happen again? Huckabee recognizes there may be a sort of been-there, done-that feeling out there. On the campaign trail, he meets it head-on: "There was another guy from Hope, Arkansas, who ran for president," he says. "He would have turned out better if he'd stayed there longer," a line that honors Hope at Bill Clinton's expense, something Republican crowds like. "People ask me all the time: Do you really believe that another unknown, obscure governor born in Hope, Arkansas, can become president of the United States. My answer is: Give us one more chance!"

The second thing that stands out about Huckabee is that there is, as he puts it, "less of me"—110 pounds less, to be exact. He lost the weight five years ago after his doctor described to him what the decade he had left to live would be like if he stayed at 300 pounds. ("My scale quit at 280," he quips.) Huckabee took the weight off in nine months, chronicling his story and urging others with a tendency toward amplitude to do as he did in *Quit Digging Your Grave with a Knife and Fork*, a title spiced with characteristic humor. Losing as much as Huckabee did, indeed turning around his health and life prospects, is a real accomplishment. As he told me, "You can't fake losing 110 pounds." Huckabee says that while his huge weight loss "is not necessarily a qualification for president," it is "indicative of a person who can set goals and who can actually accomplish them." His accomplishment also gives him standing to make his case about health care—about the need to prevent health problems later by changing behavior now. This fact about Huckabee—his lesser being—does seem to make people at least notice him. In Washington, during the Q&A at the Pizza Ranch (though pizza is not a Huckabee-approved food), one woman brought up the fact that she'd especially wanted to be at the event because, battling her own weight problem, she had just read *Digging Your Grave*. She said she was going to Ames to vote for him.

The third thing about Huckabee is that he's a former Baptist minister. He would be the first ever former pastor of a church to be president. "Probably the best preparation I ever had to be a governor was to be a pastor of a local congregation," he says. He concedes that "people think of me as a pastor who became a political person. But the truth is that I was a person in communications who backed into the pastorate who then went into politics." That he once was a pastor seems to diminish the need Huckabee might feel to discuss, as other candidates have, aspects of his faith or his "faith journey." He makes reference to his years as a Baptist pastor in ways intended to put people at ease, in case they're not. "Don't hold that against me, all of you non-Baptists," he told the crowd in Ottumwa. "A lady when I first started running for office asked me, 'Are you one of those narrow-minded Baptist ministers who think only Baptists go to heaven?' I said, 'No ma'am, actually I'm more narrow than that because I don't think all the Baptists are going to make it!"

Huckabee's chance of breaking through at Ames will depend on whether substantial portions of Iowa's large population of social conservatives, most of whom are frequent churchgoers, turn out for him. There is competition for these voters, especially from Sam Brownback, who is aggressively seeking the support of pastors. When I asked Huckabee whether he had anyone serving as his religious outreach coordinator—as some other candidates do—he looked at me, puzzled, and then said, "In my case, I am the coordinator." Huckabee's sign-up sheets—on which you indicate whether you're going to participate in the straw poll—have a place where you can write down your church or church affiliation. As for white evangelical Protestants in particular, who are overwhelmingly Republican, Huckabee doesn't have to "reach out" to them—because, as he sees it, "I am these people.'"

Huckabee may not have the right message or he may not be the man for his message. His campaign could soon lie limp as a spent balloon. On the other hand, if Huckabee moves up at Ames and, come January, he's in the top tier, he'll be drawing scrutiny—of his record as governor (including on taxes and size of government, where there is criticism from conservatives), his time as a pastor, his jobs after seminary, his boyhood in Hope. His reputation with the Arkansas press for a thin skin, not apparent in his southeastern Iowa visits, will be reviewed. In truth, Huckabee may have a better chance of being picked as a running mate than winning the GOP nomination. But right now, before Ames, before he either crashes or takes off, Huckabee can take a moment to ponder a presidential race a year from now in which his party seems likely to face someone he knows perhaps better than any other Republican contender does—Hillary Clinton.

"Republicans underestimate her at their own peril," he says. "She's extra disciplined, very focused, extremely intelligent, very different from her husband, who was a true pragmatist. She's much more ideological. But I'm appalled when people are so personal in their attacks on her. . . . Nothing will engender more support for her than being perceived as a bully of a guy attacking this woman."

And who would compete against her without bullying her or—the other danger he sees—condescending to her? Why, Mike Huckabee. "It'd be a great race," says this man from Hope. "It would be the best chance Republicans have to win." ♦

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Lights, Camera, Reaction

Thor Halvorssen's campaign to make Hollywood safe for non-leftists

By Sonny Bunch

Los Angeles

During the fourth season of HBO's hit comedy series *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, one of the subplots centered on the bumbling attempts of the show's star, Larry David, to take advantage of a rather unusual anniversary gift given to him by his wife: He can have an affair with any woman he wants, as long as he does it by the day of their anniversary (which also happens to coincide with the opening of Larry's Broadway debut in *The Producers*). Needless to say, this leads to a number of awkward encounters until finally, as time is about to run out—on the night of the show itself, in fact—the very attractive female lead in the musical invites Larry into her dressing room for a quick fling. The liberal New Yorker is game, making out with the starlet until he notices something not quite right: a picture of George W. Bush beside her vanity mirror. Disgusted, he turns away, deciding he'd rather let his gift expire than have sex with a Republican.

To many conservatives, this vignette neatly sums up Hollywood's ideological monomania: Left-wing politics trumps even a good old fashioned roll in the hay. For every Ronald Reagan extolling the greatness that is America, supporting individual rights at home and abroad, and arguing for freedom, the entertainment industry spawns twenty Alec Baldwins fulminating against American foreign policy, decrying big business's abuse of the environment, and threatening to move to Canada if Bush wins reelection. The truth is more complex, but evidence in support of the stereotype is not hard to find. When it comes time to donate money to political candidates, Democrats routinely squeeze their celebrity friends in Los Angeles for cash; in March, for example, Steven Spielberg hosted a fundraiser for Hillary Clinton that netted more than $1 million for her presidential campaign. Republicans can't count on that kind of juice.

It's not all bad news. A small segment of Hollywood was pushed rightward by 9/11, at least on national security issues; two years ago, the *New York Times* identified "former liberals and centrists like the actors David Zucker, Dennis Miller, James Woods and Ron Silver" as 9/12 Republicans. In the wake of Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, a box office bonanza raking in $370 million, the town has seen an influx of Christian filmmakers (and Christian money: billionaire evangelical Philip Anschutz's Walden Media bankrolled *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, C.S. Lewis's Christian allegory, to the tune of $150 million). And since the early '90s, David Horowitz has hosted the Wednesday Morning Club, a group of conservatives who meet roughly once a month to hear a prominent conservative speak on the issues of the day.

But these efforts have done little to change the climate of political conformity, not to say paranoia, in Hollywood. In a recent trip to Los Angeles, I met with members of every industry sector, from actors to writers to agents to executives, all of whom described themselves as either conservative or libertarian or simply not left-liberal. All of them swore up and down that there is no such thing as a conservative blacklist, but few of them were willing to go on the record during our discussions. As one person put it over lunch, he had nothing to gain by outing himself as a libertarian. "It's a complication I don't need. . . . Why make my life more difficult?"

Enter Thor Halvorssen, founder of the Moving Picture Institute (MPI), which is one part film production company, one part salon. Halvorssen has spent the last several years shuttling back and forth between New York and Los Angeles, building a community in Hollywood that does more than sit around and listen to conservative luminaries pontificate. He is procuring funding for films—mostly documentaries—with an optimistic and freedom-loving outlook, while simultaneously creating a community of

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artists that will make more such pictures in the years to come. He's also hoping to introduce a little political diversity into a monocultural industry, so that those who toil in the lower echelons of Hollywood aren't afraid to show their true political stripes, be they liberal or libertarian, conservative or Communist.

If the name sounds familiar to WEEKLY STANDARD readers, it may be because the 31-year-old Halvorssen wears more than one hat. Through his Human Rights Foundation (HRF), he has been a prominent spokesman for the liberal opposition to Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, where he was born (see his "Hurricane Hugo" in our August 8, 2005, issue). In an interview at the Moving Picture Institute's West Hollywood headquarters (located in an apartment once owned by Sheryl Crow, in a building once used by the Kennedy brothers to host their West Coast trysts), he talked about the circuitous path that has taken him from Venezuela to the film industry.

Moving Picture Institute

Thor Halvorssen and Lucy Liu at the premiere of Freedom's Fury.

His grandfather was the Norwegian ambassador to Venezuela. His mother's family traces its roots to the founders of the South American nation. She is a distant relative of Simón Bolívar; Cristóbal Mendoza, the first president of Venezuela and the author of the Venezuelan declaration of independence, was her great-great-grandfather (imagine an American tracing his roots back to both Martha Washington and Thomas Jefferson and you'd be close). "My family's always been doing stuff regarding human freedom" and individual rights, he told me. Halvorssen planned on continuing that tradition.

He enrolled at the University of Pennsylvania. After growing up on a steady diet of Latin, ancient history, and other memorization-intensive subjects at the European boarding schools he attended, he found the American university system to be less of a challenge than he had hoped for. In four years he finished an undergraduate degree (with two majors and a minor) and a master's while graduating Phi Beta Kappa. But it was his experiences outside the classroom that were most formative. He was the editor of the *Red and the Blue*, an alternative conservative/libertarian weekly published by students and distributed on campus that had fallen out of favor with the college. The administration took issue with an article about Haiti, and denounced the publication as "bigoted, racist, and hateful." In early 1995, hundreds of copies of the magazine were thrown in the trash, funding was cut off, and the group was evicted from its office space. "We then threatened to sue," Halvorssen said, "and they settled out of court. We said 'just let us publish.' I was elected editor then; we published, and it was great, it was awesome, it was impacting the culture." It was around this time that Halvorssen met Dave Kalstein, a fellow student at Penn similarly interested in "impacting the culture."

"With Thor, it was more about bias within the history department," Kalstein told me in the house he rents, nestled under the famed Hollywood sign. "How come 99 percent of professors in the history department are registered Democratic?" One year was all it took for Halvorssen to realize that he would never fit into academia. "I found the environment to be so closed-minded and in some ways so not stimulating," he said. "This was not a community I wanted to be a part of." Upon graduation, he received an award for "protecting student speech" from the president of the university—an impressive piece of irony since he had once threatened to sue her for stifling his own.

Halvorssen's tribulations with the Penn administration led him to create the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE). With cofounders Alan Charles Kors and Harvey Silverglate, Halvorssen ran the most visible (and successful) organization dedicated to defending free speech on campus the country has ever seen. He also came to understand the importance of media relations: "I did massive amounts of television, from the *O'Reilly Factor* to *Hannity and Colmes* to CNN to PBS to National Public Radio." So after leaving FIRE, he spent some time as an independent consultant, traveling the country to help nonprofit groups increase their effectiveness. And his travels increasingly took him to Hollywood, where he began introducing himself around town in preparation for his next big project: the Moving Picture Institute.

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"MPI was born out of the concept that maybe what we need is to create a community of people and encourage them," Halvorssen told me—a community that believes in "the concept that one should affirm life. By that I don't mean pro-life or pro-choice, I mean . . . that life is a good thing. That optimism is what makes it possible for us to, for instance, eliminate poverty." While building the organization, Halvorssen came across a kindred spirit intent on bringing the stories of campus bias he had dealt with on a regular basis at FIRE to the screen: Evan Coyne Maloney, a novice documentarian with little more than a camera, a website, and a gift for chronicling campus political correctness. "He makes his first film, which is not very fine tuned, *Brainwashing 101*, and then he makes *Brainwashing 201* and I'm like 'Wow! Evan, I want to produce your film.'"

This wasn't the first time Halvorssen had gotten into the production game. A few years before, he and Kalstein had attempted to turn Arnaud de Borchgrave's Cold War thriller *The Spike* into a feature film, but nothing came of it. Maloney, though, had spent the previous three years as a full time employee of On the Fence Films (a group he cofounded with Stuart Browning, the head of a successful software company, and Blaine Greenberg, a California lawyer) gathering footage for a documentary about left-wing bias on college campuses called *Indoctrinate U*. After months in the editing room, Maloney and Browning were getting frustrated with the final product but knew the footage was there for a great documentary. In stepped Halvorssen. He injected some cash into the project and, more important, brought on board Chandler Tuttle, a talented editor who took the film apart and put it back together from the ground up.

"I looked at [*Indoctrinate U*], and I think that at the time there was a lot of frustration with where the project was," Tuttle told me. "We've got this great topic, and we've got Evan, who is very charismatic, but it just wasn't working. . . . Thor wanted me to look at it as a filmmaker and to get that perspective, because I think it had been mostly laypeople who had given their feedback." Tuttle had more experience in the world of film than everyone else involved with the production combined; he graduated from NYU's prestigious film school and worked for Focus Features, the boutique studio that distributed *Brokeback Mountain*, *Lost in Translation*, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, and other critically acclaimed films. Tuttle took a week off from work and put together a much-improved product. For his efforts in improving and distributing the film, Halvorssen received a producer credit on *Indoctrinate U*.

Halvorssen was very specific about his relationship with the Moving Picture Institute. Though he founded it, works relentlessly on its behalf, and steers a good deal of talent its way, he's not professionally involved with the organization. "I'm not a staff member of MPI. I'm not even [on the board of] directors. I have no fiduciary responsibility; I can't determine where the money goes, which allows me to be involved in a whole bunch of productions without having any conflict of interest." His full time job is president and CEO of the Human Rights Foundation. He may be the first person to enjoy California because it allows him to be a workaholic. "One of the wonders of working out in L.A.," he says, "is that you can have a wonderful work day in New York that ends at 2 or 3 P.M. West Coast time, which means you can then work from 3 P.M. to 10 P.M." on other projects. The focus of the foundation is fighting the influence of dictators like Hugo Chávez and Fidel Castro. One of his most memorable pieces on the Venezuelan strongman was an August 2004 *Wall Street Journal* op-ed about a riot organized by Chávez's thugs: "Hilda Mendoza Denham, a British subject visiting Caracas for her mother's 80th birthday, was shot at close range with hollow-point bullets from a high-caliber pistol. She now lies sedated in a hospital bed after a long and complicated operation. She is my mother."

Regardless of his unofficial status at the Moving Picture Institute, Halvorssen is clearly the driving force behind the organization. "We are a production company, we are a film distribution company, we are a grant-giving education foundation, we are slowly going to become a historical archive, of sorts," he says smiling, by way of explaining the institute's mission. The MPI has picked up credits on a number of films, most of them documentaries. *The Singing Revolution* is a moving depiction of the nonviolent liberation of Estonia from the Soviet empire. *Freedom's Fury* examines the cultural significance of the December 1956 Olympic water polo match between the Soviet Union and Hungary, which took place shortly after the Soviets' bloody suppression of the Hungarian revolution. (Produced by Lucy Liu and Quentin Tarantino, *Freedom's Fury* grossed more than *Spider-Man* at the Hungarian box office.) *Mine Your Own Business* is a broadside against the hypocritical tendencies of the environmental movement. *Hammer and Tickle* is a funny little film that explores the impact of political humor in the Soviet Union.

Mine Your Own Business is a good illustration of MPI's place in the Hollywood food chain. The institute had nothing to do with the initial funding, filming, or editing of the movie. But once the picture was finished, it had nowhere to go. "We saw a fine cut, and we thought it was awesome," Halvorssen says, but "the film was dead in the water with television broadcast, with any kind of DVD distribution deal." Halvorssen pointed the filmmakers to the MPI.

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"We have paid for essentially all promotion, all distribution efforts, we gave [filmmakers Phelim McAleer and Ann McElhinney] fellowships as well, which is cash. . . . The film is now being distributed in Ecuador, Argentina; it's a film that's really making an impact, really making a difference."

Halvorssen also sees the MPI as a talent incubator. Chandler Tuttle could be considered Exhibit A in this regard. After his work on *Indoctrinate U*, the Moving Picture Institute made Tuttle a fellow, allowing him the financial freedom to leave Focus. He's since become involved with almost every aspect of MPI's operation: He has designed posters for the documentaries MPI is distributing; he helped edit and create visual graphics for Stuart Browning's response to Michael Moore's *Sicko* (a series of shorts on the health care industry viewable on the Internet and entitled *Free Market Cure*); he is writing and directing an adaptation of the Kurt Vonnegut short story "Harrison Bergeron," an MPI production with a budget nearing $100,000.

No single ideological label unites those under the MPI umbrella, and Halvorssen will place MPI interns and fellows wherever they can gain the experience and the knowledge necessary to be successful. He has already hooked interns up with people and production companies across the ideological spectrum, from the aforementioned 9/12 Republican David Zucker to Johnny Depp's outfit, Infinitum Nihil. Halvorssen is slowly amassing and nurturing a cadre of writers, actors, and directors who, whatever their other political differences, are at least dedicated to individual liberty.

Take Halvorssen's friend from Penn, Dave Kalstein, who was editor in chief of the *Red and the Blue* after Halvorssen's graduation. Kalstein tackled different stories, such as the administration's hostility towards fraternities. "I was trying to find more issues where I could approach people and put it on the cover of a magazine and have them be like, 'oh wow, I'm interested in fraternities.' And after they're done reading the article have them say 'I totally agree with what they're saying,' not even knowing that they've adopted the point of view that I wanted them to adopt. It's just a more elegant way of doing it and Thor was instrumental in getting me to understand it."

After graduating from Penn in 1999, Kalstein went to work for *Elle*, then *GQ*, and managed to sell a script to United Artists in 2005. At that point, Kalstein decided to stop "writing about fashion and blue jeans" and take the plunge—he headed out West to Hollywood. Kalstein and Halvorssen had the idea of turning *The Spike* into a feature, but since they didn't hold the rights, or the money to purchase the rights, Kalstein tackled the project "on spec." In other words, if de Borchgrave didn't like the final product, he could simply turn them down. Undaunted, Halvorssen provided the seed money. "He's like, 'Y'know, how about I loan you $10,000 to be able to live the life,' which at the time was, y'know, a lot of money," Kalstein recalls with a grin. "I refinanced my apartment in Philadelphia," Halvorssen explains, shaking his head. "Gave him a portion of the refi. Looking back on it, if I knew then what I know now about the film industry . . . it was absurd." But Halvorssen "gave Dave what essentially would have been the first MPI grant, except it came out of my refinance."

Though *The Spike* never materialized for Kalstein, he made a short film called *Recess*, about a group of kids trying to escape a dystopian boarding school in the future. Unable to figure out how to write it as a feature script, he turned it into a novel instead. *Prodigy* sold to Thomas Dunne Books, and Kalstein was then hired to adapt it for the screen (it's slated to shoot late this year or early next year in South Africa with a budget of $20 million). Kalstein has since been hired as a writer for the NBC update of *The Bionic Woman* and is developing a series for Showtime with his literary hero, Bret Easton Ellis. (Kalstein is also happy to report that, having hit the big time, he has repaid Halvorssen in full.)

Bringing the same ethic to his novel and scripts that he brought to the *Red and the Blue*, Kalstein isn't interested in making political polemics. Rather, he wants to make popular art that contains subtle political messages. Wrapped within the tautly paced boarding school thriller *Prodigy*, for example, one can find a number of different messages that resonate with folks outside the liberal-left cocoon of Hollywood. Writing about the establishment of the ultra-successful Stansbury Academy, a prestigious school that (a few decades hence) has developed a cure for AIDS and cancer (as well as a flying car), Kalstein fires off an anti-teachers' union broadside:

> These educators—mostly the top teachers from the country's best elementary, middle, and high schools, along with some administration types—were fed up with the control and power the nation's teachers' unions exerted over the world of schooling at the start of the twenty-first century. The state of public schooling had become increasingly dire. Reading and comprehension levels were at an all-time low, despite the fact that the flow of information and knowledge were more readily available than at any other time in history. The problem was not the students' access or social skills. It was the teachers. They were being paid more than ever before, . . . working without accountability for their students' performance. Due to union labor laws, it had become virtually impossible to fire the teachers.

Kalstein points admiringly to a film he did not write but enjoyed immensely: *Knocked Up*, the box office smash about the relationship that grows between a slacker and a career-driven entertainment reporter whom he has, well,

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knocked up. Though Kalstein is pro-choice and believes the writer/director of *Knocked Up*, Judd Apatow, is as well, he says, "You can look at *Knocked Up* and say it's the biggest pro-life movie ever. It *is*, it's a total pro-life movie. . . . He gave a nuanced look at why they kept the baby. Why didn't they just abort it? Both the characters, they both took it seriously. . . . I don't care how brilliant the conservative is, I don't care how much money he's got, no pro-lifer will be able to make a better pro-life movie than *Knocked Up*. . . . You have to tell a great story first, and your ideas will come through the story."

"Art, if it's well done, can have far more of an impact," says Steve Schub, an actor and singer, in between bites of his chili dog outside of Carney's, a hot dog stand along the Sunset Strip. "If you can have one movie that speaks, like *The Lives of Others*—I mean, you can read as much as you want about what life in a Communist country would be like, but that movie is so incredible. . . . I wish that was an American film." Schub is another person who has been drawn into Halvorssen's web. "He's sort of [like] John Galt," Schub says of Halvorssen, referring to the Ayn Rand character from *Atlas Shrugged*. "I think he's doing a pretty good job of getting us to out ourselves [politically], to come out and work together." Schub is an example of the diversity of ideologies Halvorssen is hoping to reach. His Ayn Rand allusion is no coincidence: He described himself as a "radical Objectivist" ("conservatives can be as much of a threat to free speech as liberals can") to go along with Dave Kalstein ("a neoconservative") and Chandler Tuttle ("a libertarian"). Halvorssen eschews labeling himself ideologically, insisting instead he is only "a civil liberties and civil rights advocate. . . . I'm focused on free speech, I'm focused on issues of individual rights, I'm focused on issues of poverty." When Schub learned of Halvorssen's efforts to promote individual rights, he took a chance and sent him an email. The two struck up a conversation, and the Human Rights Foundation will sponsor Schub's "Afro-Celtic Yiddish ska" band, the Fenwicks, on a mini-tour this fall.

In addition to being a radical Objectivist, the *24* vet (he played "Samir" in the latest season) also happens to be the only actor who would speak to me on the record. He insists that there is no blacklist against those who don't conform to the left consensus, though he says that "it is just assumed that you are a liberal or that you are a leftist, or on the left on some level." It seems to annoy Schub that actors think anyone should care about their bringing "awareness" to an issue. "Why would I necessarily humor their idea on global warming, as opposed to [the ideas of] a plumber or a welder?" He thinks it can detract from the audience's appreciation of an actor's work if they know what he thinks about every little issue. "I think as an actor you want people . . . to know as little about you as possible. . . . With actors I love, I don't want to know what their agenda is in life because the whole idea is that you're supposed to seduce people into suspending their disbelief, just see the character." Schub is no slouch, technically; he's a member of the Actors Studio, the elite organization founded by Elia Kazan where professional actors go to work on their craft. And he's certainly committed to social change, though not in the same way that, say, George Clooney is. "I think that real change has to happen on a philosophical-cultural level, and that's where I think [the MPI's] focus is."

Since the Moving Picture Institute does not receive any sort of government funding, and isn't really in the business of turning out profitable films, it relies on private donations to keep the operation running. One of those donors is David Thayer, a hedge fund manager who was interested in "a counterpoint to the likes of Michael Moore and Oliver Stone." Considering "the way people's eyes kind of glaze over during public policy debates, this could be a much more effective way, and entertaining way . . . to get the point across," he says. In order to get that point across, however, people need to see the final product, always the most daunting obstacle for any documentary maker. In the case of *Indoctrinate U*, MPI has secured theatrical distribution for the film in select cities starting in October. Additionally, Halvorssen is working with a major entertainment company to create an MPI label to distribute *Indoctrinate U* and other films on DVD.

"I hope and I think they expect that ultimately it's going to be less of a struggle to get a movie like *Indoctrinate U* into mainstream distribution outlets," Thayer says. With any luck, *Indoctrinate U* will be the first, says Halvorssen. "There's a tactical aspect to *Indoctrinate U*," he told me. "There's never been a conservative documentary that's been put into theaters. . . . If *Indoctrinate U* succeeds . . . in theaters it's the first time it's been done. It'll open the floodgates."

That's what Halvorssen wants to do in the end: open the floodgates. Encourage talented people of like mind to come to Hollywood and make films that inspire the better angels of our nature. "Films show you how people can be heroic, how the everyday man can be heroic," he says, adding, "I have a mission, man. My mission is to make the world a little bit better." Whether it is through combating the injustices he sees taking place on a daily basis in Venezuela, or correcting the distortions of the American dream he sees in the popular culture, he seems to be doing just that. ♦

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Man About Town

Leo knew everyone, everyone knew Leo

BY JOSEPH EPSTEIN

Random House / Duane Michals

Leo Lerman, Veneto, Italy, 1980

There is an old joke about a man named Sam, who knew everyone and was known by everyone, so that, Easter morning, on St. Peter's Square, when Sam appears on the balcony of the Vatican, a number of people in the crowd are heard to murmur, "Who's the guy in the white yarmulke with Sam?"

For nearly 50 years a writer and editor for various Condé Nast and other slick magazines, Leo Lerman was a lot like Sam. Born in 1914, Lerman was a New Yorker by spirit, temperament, and outlook. He was also unabashedly Jewish, gay, and very smart. Such was his glittering web of acquaintance that one could almost say that, if you lived in Manhattan between 1940 and 1994, and Leo Lerman didn't know you, you have to consider the possibility that you were not worth knowing.

The great frustration of Leo Lerman's life was a long-planned but never executed great book, a Proustian chronicle of his life and times. Lerman was a devoted admirer of Proust, and thought himself well positioned to be the American Marcel Proust. Off on one journalistic project or another—he was, briefly, the second editor-in-chief of the revived *Vanity Fair*, between the original editor, a man named Richard Locke, and Tina Brown—and with endless social engagements intervening, Lerman really hadn't the *sitzfleish*, or bottom patience, to sit down to the composition of this book, which was at first to be a novel, then an extensive memoir, then an autobiography, and ended being nowhere near a reality.

The Grand Surprise
The Journals of Leo Lerman
Edited by Stephen Pascal
Knopf, 688 pp., $37.50

Lerman did make a number of abortive runs at writing his phantom book. He was also the keeper of a journal, in the form of many notebooks filled with gossip and introspection, found after his death. In these notebooks he chronicled the lives of the talented, with a special eye toward their character, not excluding their foibles. Now, through the good and patient work of Stephen Pascal, for many years Lerman's assistant at Condé Nast, the bits of

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Lerman's uncompleted memoir, many items from his journal, and parts of his correspondence, the book Leo Lerman longed to write has now come into the world in a form its author would never have imagined. The title *The Grand Surprise* is taken from the second name of the Camberwell Beauty, a rare and exotic butterfly, lepidoptery being a boyhood love of Lerman's. The title is a good one, its point being that Leo Lerman's days were given over to the endless pursuit of another grand surprise, this one in the form of the perfect social life.

"Among New York's movers and markers of art," Stephen Pascal writes in his Introduction, "Leo Lerman grew legendary as a man who knew everyone and had seen everything. For fifty years, it seemed he attended every debut, opening, and vernissage in the city and had the crowd at his place to celebrate afterward."

Many of the usual suspects were among his guests: Truman Capote, Paul and Jane Bowles, Carson McCullers, Virgil Thomson, Anais Nin, Katherine Anne Porter, the Trillings, Diana and Lionel, the Bernsteins, Leonard and Felicia, and several others. His circle of friends and acquaintances was also highly Europeanized, and included Marlene Dietrich, George Balanchine, Maria Callas, Noël Coward, Margot Fonteyn, and Gertrude Lawrence.

Bald early, heavyset (weight was always a problem), wearing a beard because of a serious car accident that scarred the bottom part his face and left him with serious health problems as he grew older, Lerman in midlife resembled the Henry James whom others have described as looking like a sea captain. Perfectly at ease with his homosexuality, his Jewishness, his autodidactical education (he went to Feagin School of Dramatic Art in New York, where he trained to become a stage-manager, though he always read widely and with taste and penetration), he seemed altogether at ease in the world of high fashion, performing arts, visual art, and smart journalism.

Lerman lived with two men during his adult life, both painters, the second, a man named Gray Foy, who is alive today. His partners tended to do the heavy lifting of organizing his domestic life, while he paid the brunt of the expenses and brought in the great names for his famous parties. Those portions of his book that take up the emotional complications of his relationships with these two men are the dullest parts of *The Grand Surprise*. What is of much greater interest is, in Stephen Pascal's words, Lerman's continuous pursuit of "powerful beauty, performance, and character through a long life." Lerman died at 80.

The Grand Surprise is a very homosexual book. At its center are portraits of powerful women—*monstres sacrés*—whom he cultivated and who were attracted to Lerman in great part because of his kindness and charm, in lesser but not insignificant part, one supposes, because he posed no sexual threat to them. The first of the powerhouse women in Lerman's life were Betsy Blackwell, Carmel Snow, Diana Vreeland, the editors of *Mademoiselle*, *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and other women's magazines. But Lerman was also a close friend and confidant of Eleonora von Mendelssohn (herself the lover of Walter Rathenau, Max Reinhardt, and Arturo Toscanini), Marlene Dietrich, Maria Callas, Diana Trilling, and Mina Curtiss (sister of Lincoln Kirstein). To take up with such women, divas of the spirit, is to put oneself in a permanently secondary, largely subservient position—subservient, that is, to their own tireless self-absorption. This Lerman was willing to do, which didn't preclude his taking the measure of their gloriousness and wretchedness both. "Adoration nourished her," he writes of Marlene Dietrich, "the way health food sustains others."

The gossip quotient in *The Grand Surprise* is marvelously high. Lerman cites Capote for genius in this line, remarking that "Truman told so many dreadful things about everybody. It's wonderful how Truman acquires bits of information and then passes them off as his own." Whether Lerman confined his own best gossip to his notebooks or passed it out along with the *canapés* at his parties, is difficult to know.

Some of the gossip is purely amusing, such as Lerman's reporting that Frieda Lawrence, widow of the novelist, mistook Lionel Trilling for Diana's son. He lunches with Dame Rebecca West, claiming it was if he had dined "with the most brilliant gossip columnist in the world." He reports that, in conversation, Cary Grant went in heavily for four-letter words. Here, from a letter to his brother, is a perfect three-cushioned name-drop: "I had a lovely, lively enounter with Princess Margaret last week at Cecil Beaton's party for Audrey Hepburn . . ." The index to *The Grand Surprise* reads like the Yellow Pages of intellectual and artistic society between 1940 and 1990.

A lot of the gossip is about people's sex lives. Nice to know, for example, that while Leonard Bernstein chased boys, his wife Felicia had an affair with Goddard Lieberson, president of Columbia Records. Yul Brynner, we learn, was bisexual, as was Vladimir Horowitz. If Truman Capote is to be believed—a case of gossip at the second remove, of which *The Grand Surprise* contains a fair amount—so was Steve McQueen; another piece of second-remove gossip features Claudette Colbert as a lesbian. Maria Callas tells Lerman that Aristotle Onassis slept with Lee Radziwill before Jacqueline Kennedy napped him (and his money) off for herself. She also tells him of Onassis's sexual proclivities with women; he turns out to have been a servant's entrance man, a program along with which Jackie O. wouldn't go, though Maria Callas did, finding that it "hurt and was boring."

"I adore gossip of all kinds," Lerman writes in 1970, but then adds that "I gossip less and less, save to myself. Of course these notebooks are extreme narcissism. This is a search to find myself and my times in my own looking glass, and in looking glasses held up by others." If Leo Lerman were a retailer (and re-teller) of gossip merely, or a *Vogue* magazine scribbler only, he would not be of much interest. But he was more than that—he was a serious person, caught between his ambitions and his fantasies. His fantasy was to live among the famous and talented;

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his ambition to prove himself as a member among them in good standing by giving evidence of his own talent. His was a rare case of a man able to realize his fantasy but never—unless now, posthumously—achieve his ambition.

"I am a born voyeur," Lerman wrote in his journal, "which in the most positive sense means: I love life." His curiosity was wide and so was his appreciation. "I admire industry in people and courage and quiet and devotion and humor and a sense of irony and laughter and a loving heart and optimism and genuine douleur and style and panache," he wrote. "I detest negativism and destructiveness and niggardly-stingy ways. Energy exults me."

Enamored of the high life though Lerman was, he was also skillful at seeing beneath its sheen. In Mary McCarthy he recognized "a self-afflicted scourge," ungenerous, heartless, chiding. He views Alvin Ailey's famous work *Revelations* as entertainment passing itself off as art, an interesting distinction. Ballet, which he loved, he perceives as "dedicated people, ultimately as ill-fated as butterflies, the living symbols of transience." He spots the avariciousness of Stravinsky: "Always the eater, not the eaten." Gore Vidal he finds "complacent, pompous, assured that his every platitude is an apothegm, a witty wisdom."

Self-doubt plays through these pages. Lerman regularly blames himself for the self-indulgence of his life. "I have wasted my life," he wrote, when still in his thirties. "A sloppy, sloppy life—mostly notions and remarks and little achievement." The "dressy life I now experience," he realizes, keeps him from doing the serious work he ought to be doing. What good, after all, would Proust be without the justifying achievement of *Remembrance of Things Past*?

He realizes that one of the major aspects of his life has been building up other people, "trying to make everything and everyone glamorous, a star" through the efforts of his journalism in *Vogue* and elsewhere. He fears he may be no more than a *naches-schlepper*, a Yiddish phrase meaning a hanger-on, someone who trails after the gifted and fortunate. The pursuit of artificial glamour at times gets to him. "Suddenly," he writes, "I am bone-tired—from coping with neurotics."

Commenting on the sale of Proust manuscripts to the University ofTexas, he notes how fantastic is the very notion of Proust in Texas: "I see how possible it is to live in a fantasy world and become stranger and stranger. See! I've lived that way all of my life." Leo Lerman had a seat in the dress circle of the fashionable life of his time, though he knew that he paid a high price for it.

And yet there is something redeeming in Lerman's kindness ("tactlessness," he writes, "is always cruel") his ardor for life (his constant curiosity, he felt, made suicide an impossibility for him), his preference always for the personal and the palpable ("It is depersonalization I hate, and this is why I am against so much of 'modern' art and psychoanalysis"). His relentless sociability reveals not a social climber but a truly gregarious soul.

That a social life of the kind Leo Lerman lived is no longer possible is more than a touch sad. Politics today are too divisive to make such a life any longer likely among artists and intellectuals; and then there are the further divisions, even in the hollow world of celebrity, into youth culture, black culture, academic culture, and more, all working against the formation of a coherent world of the smart and talented such as Lerman enjoyed.

Leo Lerman discovered the Grand Surprise. And he was smart enough to recognize that behind the Grand Surprise was, as he put it in his notebook one night, the home truth of "how gay and sad life is simultaneously." His rich book provides charming and irrefutable testimony that this is so. ♦

Magic Alert

The last installment in the Harry Potter saga. Or is it?

BY LISA SCHIFFREN

As the final installment of J.K. Rowling's 4,195-page epic begins, the Lord Voldemort and his Death Eaters are on the verge of capturing the Ministry of Magic and taking over the entire wizarding community of England.

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows
by J.K. Rowling
Levine, 759 pp., $34.99

Their goal is to purge society of muggle-born (nonmagical) wizards and restore a "pure blood" wizard standard. For Voldemort to assume ultimate power he must kill Harry Potter—or Harry must kill him, according to an old prophecy. Harry, who is about to come of age at 17, has decided not to return to the Hogwarts School, scene of all previous volumes. Instead, he and his beloved friends Hermione Granger and Ronald Weasley set out to fulfill a mission that Harry had been charged with by Albus Dumbledore, the revered headmaster who died at the hands of Severus Snape at the end of Book Six.

In seeking to become impervious to death, Voldemort had engaged in the darkest of dark magic. He had split his soul into seven parts, keeping one and storing each of the others in an object called a horcrux. One splits one's soul only by the act of murder. Not until each horcrux is found and destroyed can the Dark Lord be killed.

Unlike the previous books, which

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are plotted around the school year at Hogwarts, and with a mystery solved at the end, *Deathly Hallows* takes the form of a heroic quest.

So the three teenagers set out, without a plan or much guidance, and only their wits (and the usual entertaining magic) to find the hidden horcruxes in a landscape under siege by a totalitarian force.

That the Death Eaters are searching for Harry, to bring him in to be slain by Voldemort, adds plenty of tension and forward propulsion. Nor is Harry allowed to confide his task to the older members of the resistance—known as the Order of the Phoenix. This cat-and-mouse game continues in various forms until the final showdown.

At heart, the Harry Potter series is a traditional struggle between good and evil, freedom and slavery, love and death. Everyone must choose which side he or she is on, and all choices have great consequences over characters' lifetimes—and even beyond, to their children's.

Rowling has been quoted as saying that she thinks even nine-year-olds are old enough to understand that life is about moral choices. Any book that can convey that to children is a good thing, especially in the world we currently inhabit.

The most critical choice made by many of the characters in the series—up until the very end of Book Five, the movie version of which just came out—is whether or not to believe Harry's claim that Voldemort has returned from exile and is gathering strength. In what originally seemed like an amusing tangent, Rowling has devoted a considerable amount of space to the workings of the Wizard government, known as the Ministry of Magic. Through several volumes the Minister of Magic, one Cornelius Fudge, remained willfully blind to Voldemort's resurgence. His successor, Rufus Scrimgeour, wished to use Harry to reassure the public that matters were in hand, even when no action was being taken.

Now, the Ministry has been taken over without a struggle, and sympathizers inside are happy to start purging wizard ranks of muggle-borns and certain "half-bloods." The Ministry, which has always been able to track witches and wizards who perform illegal magic, now exerts totalitarian control over community members. (Without reading too much into this, since Rowling is no conservative, it is healthy for children to absorb the lesson that the government won't always protect them, and when the stakes are high, individuals must act.)

Of course, the unprecedented popularity of this series—325 million books sold worldwide, 8.3 million of this current volume sold in the United States *on the first day*—cannot be entirely ascribed to its solid politics. The fact is that J.K. Rowling has imagined an entire wonderful world, including the backstories of most of those who people it. And they are deeply romantic backstories at that.

She has devised funny, charming details—portraits that move and talk, invisibility cloaks, bags that expand to hold vast supplies without getting bigger—and deeply eccentric, often lovable characters. Her ability to plot intricately detailed stories seven books out is legendary. And here, at the end, she really did tie up vast amounts of detail that she had foreshadowed volumes ago. Fast-paced action—yup. The prose moves—which is one way that it keeps children (and the rest of us) reading. It may not be literary—okay, it isn't—and some find it a bit treacly; but as *children's literature* it is a wonderful shared myth for a time when children's culture is grossly commercialized.

As a parent of Harry Potter fans, I've been thrilled to see the books promulgate out-of-fashion virtues such as bravery and honor, deep love of friends, and extraordinary loyalty to them.

Harry and his friends live in Gryffindor House, where being lion-hearted counts for more than just plain intelligence. The clearest embodiment of this virtue is Harry's housemate, Neville Longbottom, who arrives at school a stammering, clumsy, self-conscious boy, raised by a tyrannical grandmother. After proving his mettle over five books, Neville winds up with the privilege of slaying Voldemort's last horcrux, and with a sword that is available only to "true Gryffindors." Do you know how rarely bravery or honor is discussed in books for preteens? Or teens? Like, never.

Rowling, famously an abandoned single mother on welfare when she started writing—and now, deservedly, the richest woman in England—tells us over and again that there is nothing more important than the love of parents for their children. Though Harry is an orphan, it is his mother's love and her sacrifice of her life to save him that protects him against Voldemort's attempts to kill him. The depth of Harry's longing for his parents is the most touching part of the books. (Well, maybe only to parents.)

Meanwhile, Voldemort's driving hatred for muggles similarly owes everything to his muggle-father's abandonment of his mother and himself, followed by her death. In *Deathly Hallows* Narcissa Malfoy, mother of Harry's classmate Draco, wife of the vengeful and cruel Death Eater Lucius, brazenly betrays Voldemort to rescue her son—saving Harry in the process. This series is more explicitly pro-life, pro-family, anti-cult-of-death than any current secular cultural artifact I can think of.

Still, if this book has a serious weakness, it is that Rowling rarely paints central characters in moral shades of gray. Harry and his mates are so virtuous, so strong, and so committed to fighting evil, that there isn't much room for the kind of internal conflict that leads to growth. Neither he nor his friends have much of a dark side, unless adolescent angst and Ron's petulance count.

To be sure, we have watched this character grow from an 11-year-old innocent, alone in the world, into a young man who has shouldered the burdens of that world. In *Deathly Hallows*, with his mentors Sirius Black and Dumbledore dead, Harry rises to the occasion and becomes a true leader, in thought and deed. Perhaps that is enough maturation for most readers.

Speaking of complexity, one of the more interesting twists here is the

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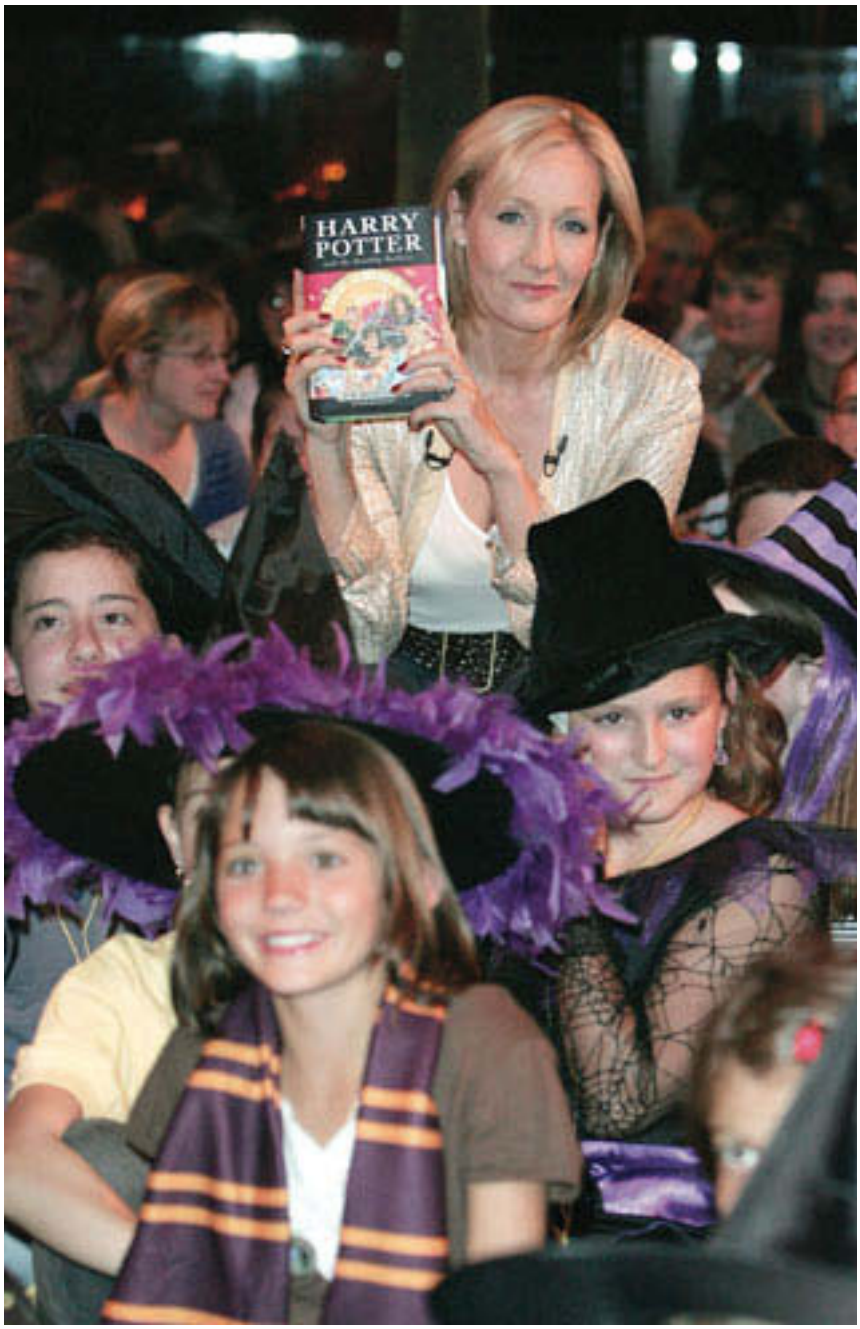
exploration of Albus Dumbledore's past, which turns out to have been more complicated and less wise and benign than previously shown. In his youth, Dumbledore had quite a lust for personal power, which he learned to abjure at great cost. His experience explains why, when Harry doubted himself, Dumbledore has always argued that a person is the product of his moral choices, not genes or inclinations.

As the story closes, readers finally learn the answer to the real mystery: For which side was double-agent Severus Snape, the most complicated, interesting character in the story, really working? In addition to being ill-tempered and greasy-haired, Snape is both a former Death Eater and member of the Order of the Phoenix. Evidence for the good hinged entirely on the fact that Dumbledore trusted him.

Naturally, when he murdered Dumbledore at the end of Book Six, the question seemed answered. But Rowling is a believer in redemption by love. Now we learn that Snape has never ceased loving Lily Potter, even though he lost her to James Potter. His ultimate allegiance stems from a desire to honor Lily's sacrifice for her son.

Perhaps because Rowling likes her characters black and white, or perhaps because she wishes to imbue the series with some explicitly Christian morality, she paints herself into a funny corner. In all the skirmishes leading up to *Deathly Hallows*' penultimate clash—a set-piece battle between Voldemort's followers and Harry's allies—Harry refuses to use his wand or skills to kill enemies who are actively trying to kill him and his people. His side suffers grievous losses from this renunciation.

It is clear that Rowling believes that this preserves his purity of heart. She does not seem to find it troubling that many of Harry's allies die at the hands of Death Eaters, who could earlier have been dispatched instead of merely disarmed. It is not immoral to kill those who come to kill you, and in a novel that is devoted to a clash between good and evil, it is odd for Rowling to suggest otherwise.



WireImage / Eamonn McCormack

J.K. Rowling and fans, July 2007

During that bloody battle at Hogwarts, Voldemort offers to stop all hostilities and welcome Harry's allies to his new order—if only Harry will give himself up. Harry, who knows that there are things more important than death, decides that he will sacrifice himself to protect the others, as his mother and father and others sacrificed for him. Harry walks, wand put away, to meet death at Voldemort's hands. This heavy-handed Christological imagery—lamb to the slaughter, dying that others might live—is unnecessary.

In the end, of course, it all works out. Harry survives. Evil is defeated. Peace returns to the wizarding world, and ultimately everyone marries, raises children (which is the main business of life), and sends the next generation off to Hogwarts School.

That's a totally satisfying end to a wonderful series. Though, of course, one hopes dearly that it hasn't really ended. ♦

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The Oswald Effect

Johnny, we hardly knew ye after November 1963.

BY STEVEN F. HAYWARD

Robert, Jacqueline, Edward Kennedy

Corbis / Wally McNamee

Encounter Books, the publisher of this provocative and penetrating new book about John F. Kennedy, could scarcely contrive a more apt confirmation of its thesis about the destructive self-delusion of the left than *Time*'s cover package for the week of July 2 on "What We Can Learn from JFK."

"Americans are still trying to figure out nearly a half a century after his abbreviated presidency who Jack Kennedy really was," David Talbot's jejune thumbsucker tells us.

But whoever he was, we know he was great—or at least would have been great had he lived to fulfill his promise as "a man ahead of his time." Talbot faithfully reiterates the family/party line that "there was a heroic grandeur to John F. Kennedy's Administration," adding the latest thinly based revisionism that JFK had in mind a grand strategy to end the Cold War. In a separate piece Robert Dallek reminds us of the second part of liberalism's coda that Kennedy was committed to progress on civil rights, and the manner in which his murder helped propel the Civil Rights Act to passage has lent verisimilitude to the theme that his death amounted to a "martyrdom" for civil rights.

Camelot and the Cultural Revolution
How the Assassination of John F. Kennedy Shattered American Liberalism
by James Piereson
Encounter, 176 pp., $25.95

If we are still trying to "figure out" Kennedy after all these years, it is because, James Piereson's book argues, we so grossly distorted him in the aftermath of his death for a variety of confused and debilitating motives.

None of the eight—*eight*—articles in *Time*'s JFKfest, including the obligatory pro and con on whether his killing was a conspiracy, mentions the one fact that Piereson finds most salient to probing the political effects of JFK's death: JFK was murdered by an ideological Communist.

"The assassination of a popular president by a Communist should have generated a revulsion against everything associated with left wing doctrines," Piereson writes. "Yet something close to the opposite happened. In the aftermath of the assassination, left wing ideas and revolutionary leaders, Marx, Lenin, Mao, and Castro foremost among them, enjoyed a greater vogue in the United States than at any time in our history." Piereson argues convincingly that it was the reaction to the assassination itself, within the mainstream American establishment as well as among liberal intellectuals, that caused liberalism essentially to suffer a nervous breakdown.

That Kennedy was killed at the hands of a Communist should have had a clear and direct meaning: "President Kennedy was a victim of the Cold War." Everyone had reasons for averting their gaze from this fact. For Lyndon Johnson, it would have carried frightful implications for foreign policy if it turned out that Lee Harvey Oswald had links to Castro or the KGB (which Piereson suggests is remotely possible). Liberals didn't want to dwell on this fact for a mix of other reasons. In the early hours after JFK was shot, we didn't yet know of Oswald's Communist background, and the media jumped to the conclusion that Kennedy's killing must have been the work of right-wing extremists. The day after the assassination, James Reston wrote in the *New York Times* that the assassination was the result of a "streak of violence in the American character" and that "from the beginning to the end of his administration, [Kennedy] was trying to tamp down the violence of extremists from the right."

This "meme," as we would say today, so quickly took hold that it could not be shaken, even after Oswald's noxious background began to come out. Indeed, the notion of collective responsibility would be repeated five years later after Robert Kennedy was murdered by a Communist Arab radical who professed deep hatred for America. Piereson's analysis prompts the thought that the phenomenon of liberal guilt

Steven F. Hayward, the F.K. Weyerhaeuser fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, is the author of The Age of Reagan: The Fall of the Old Liberal Order, 1964-1980.

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owes it origin to JFK's assassination: "Once having accepted the claim that Kennedy was a victim of the national culture, many found it all too easy to extend the metaphor into other areas of American life, from race and poverty to the treatment of women to the struggle against Communism."

Piereson's discerning eye draws out the debilitating consequence of this: It de-legitimated the great liberal tradition of incremental reform, and robbed liberalism of its optimistic patrimony and belief in progress.

Alongside the idea of the collective guilt of American society, Kennedy's assassination disoriented American liberals in several other ways. "The claim that the far right represented the main threat to progress and democratic order," Piereson writes, "was no longer credible after a Marxist assassinated an American president." In addition, Piereson reminds us of the years prior to JFK's killing, when there was an extensive literature from liberalism's premier intellectuals sneering at the far right's preoccupation with conspiracy. The right's fascination with conspiracy theories, writers like Richard Hofstadter and Daniel Bell thought, was a sign of the unseriousness of conservatism. The obsession with JFK assassination theories—which was done in part to deflect the implications of Oswald's communism—has put the shoe on the other foot: From the Grassy Knoll to Halliburton's role in 9/11, it is now the left that is consumed with conspiracies.

The genius of this book is that Piereson situates his account of the radicalization of liberalism in the 1960s within the long tradition of liberal philosophy going back to the progressive era, and it's worth its price for the second chapter alone, which offers a trenchant synoptic account of the evolution of 20th-century liberalism.

Drawing on the perceptive self-criticism of Lionel Trilling and other mid-century liberal thinkers, Piereson notes that liberalism's rationalist and progressive assumptions were too brittle to survive a tragedy on the scale of Kennedy's assassination. The assassination "seemed to call for some kind of intellectual reconstruction" on the left. Instead, the left lost its mind. As the *Time* package attests, liberalism still has not come to grips with this, preferring instead to recycle the old themes and regurgitate the conspiracy theories for the umpteenth time.

Piereson was an academic political scientist before becoming the long-time executive director of the John M. Olin Foundation in the 1980s. As is well known (especially on the left), Olin's support for conservative scholarship was instrumental to building a counter-establishment over the last generation. The Olin Foundation, in keeping with the wishes of its founder, closed down and distributed all its funds in 2005. Reading *Camelot and the Cultural Revolution*, one might have wished it had closed down sooner to release Piereson to write works such as this. ♦

A Family Tragedy

The human cost of the Iranian revolution.

BY ANN STAPLETON

"What an illusion [is] the idea of an ordered, ordinary life," writes Dalia Sofer, an Iranian-born New Yorker who, in 1982 at the age of ten, fled post-revolutionary Iran with her family.

The Septembers of Shiraz
by Dalia Sofer
Ecco, 352 pp., $24.95

Her brave and humane first novel, *The Septembers of Shiraz*, based on the time of her father's detention and torture in Tehran's Evin prison, begins with the arrest of Isaac Amin, an Iranian Jew suspected of spying for Israel. There, at his work desk—with his "scattered files, a metal paperweight, a box of Dunhill cigarettes, a crystal ashtray, and a cup of tea, freshly brewed, two mint leaves floating inside," the "indifferent items" of personal freedom "witnessing this event"—life as he has known it comes to an end. Sofer negotiates with pity and an absence of illusion between the personal and the historical, the short view and the long, and in such a way as to illuminate both, often quite hauntingly, in a single image.

Ann Stapleton is a writer in Ohio.

The history of the world and the story of one family come together disquietly here, as in her description of the absurd and doomed, self-forgetfully fierce act of love of an ordinary woman who, faced with the arrest of her husband and the sudden knowledge that she may never see him again, persists in making him a cheese sandwich, complete with parsley and radishes, before he is taken away.

One of her husband's captors snatches the sandwich from her hands and devours it "in three or four bites," saying, "Thanks, Sister. How did you know I was starving?" There is the banal brutality of the way in which a false ideology plays out in real lives. But here, as elsewhere in the novel, it is the sometimes-threatened but ineradicable love between human hearts that retrieves its own meanings from the rubble of historical shift.

The prisoner Mehdi, whose infected feet have been flayed so viciously during routine torture that he will probably lose them both, stubbornly applies himself to the making of a little wooden shoe, a present for his

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child, whom he may never see again. Isaac's daughter Shirin steals prisoner files from the house of a friend whose father is in the Revolutionary Guards and buries them in the garden, hoping, with a child's magical thinking, to save the lives of the persons whose names appear there—one of whom is her uncle Javad, Isaac's brother.

At her own peril, Farnaz, Isaac's wife, gives $10,000 to the ne'er-do-well Javad so that he can flee Iran because she knows Isaac would do so, saying it is the hope for a new life he is lending. When the Amin family later receives a letter from Paris written in code—"The children have grown up"—to let them know that Javad has made it to safety, the heart lifts with theirs in gratitude for all the charming and irresponsible people we love whose virtues are not always discernible by ordinary light, but whose irreplaceable value can sometimes be seen by the few intense rays of a dark time.

In a prose style made powerful by virtue of its quiet restraint, Dalia Sofer documents the forced conversion of an entire vibrant civilization to the strictures of a black-and-white totalitarianism: "Movie posters and shampoo advertisements"—the minor gauderies of autonomy—are "replaced by sweeping murals of clerics" and "once-dapper men and women," against their will, "become bearded shadows and black veils."

She draws the necessary contrast between the religious fascism of Iran's ruling mullahs and the restrictive, faith-based, yet joyful (because it is freely chosen) life of the Hasidic family who befriend Isaac's son Parviz, stranded in New York during the time of his father's captivity. On the night of Isaac's deliverance, twin sons are born to the Mendelson family, as if the sound of an infant's first helpless, self-insistent cry is an answer, the only one that makes any sense at all, to what "jars [Isaac] out of sleep" in prison—"not the sound of the bullet itself, but the thump of the body falling to the ground a second later" and the silence that always follows.

Unsentimental about the fate of the shah, described here as both "the beacon of the Middle East" and "the tyrant who had crushed anyone who dared speak against him," Sofer conflates his fall with the loss of Shirin's baby tooth—the adults preoccupied, she finds it under her pillow the next morning just as she left it—a radical parallelism of events large and small that is always necessarily true. And in a remarkable dual image containing all fear and hope for the world, Sofer describes the footsteps as he plays on the stairs of the young son of Isaac's interrogator, a man once so severely tortured by the shah's secret police that the existence of the boy is thought to be a miracle.

The presence of the unseen, unknowable child—who will he grow up to be?—comforts Isaac in his despair, and yet with such a heavy inheritance of hatred, the angel may well become the monster of future nightmares.

It is a sorrow to be reminded that, even after the revolution, Iran remains a country of families who love one another, who "want hot coffee, cool breezes, clean sheets, good love," who, even as Isaac does in his cell, must feel in their still-free hearts sequestered within captive bodies, that "a man has a right to want to live." In America, with another exile from home, Parviz listens to a cassette, the "deep, precise" voice of the man's cousin singing *gazals*, the singer having been executed the year before in Iran. In prison, a classical pianist, a friend of Farnaz's who once performed at the opera house, calls out Isaac's name just before he is shot, "his final audience a firing squad."

The music of the silenced plays through *The Septembers of Shiraz*, the notes exquisite and profoundly moving, meant to be exiled from the world and yet somehow still here, as when Isaac Amin's son Parviz, in a New York pizza shop, catches the strains of Frank Sinatra singing a "mellow song" that carries him back home, that "place in one's bones," to his father's study, on a peaceful Sunday morning in Iran. ♦

Walcott in Verse

Perceiving the world in a formal setting.

BY PATRICK J. WALSH

Derek Walcott is a passionate poet. Passion is a word much misused today. It means to suffer in love and to persevere. It is an apt description of Walcott's poetry. For Walcott, "Poetry is a divine discontent that says there is something more than this. There is more than me; there is more than what's immediate and temporal. That discontent is part of the beat and spirit of poetry."

Selected Poems
by Derek Walcott
Edited by Edward Baugh
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 328 pp., $25

Patrick J. Walsh is a writer in Massachusetts.

Though domiciled as a professor at Boston University, Walcott is not part of academia's debilitating consensus:

> The greatest horrors in my teaching life occurred when young students have repeated what other teachers have told them: "this thing has too much melody," "this thing has too much rhythm," "you should not use rhyme," and so on. I mean, I don't know any other culture in the history of the world that has ever said to anybody—that poetry has too much melody! I don't know on what basis this is founded. I think when a democracy gets over-

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assertive it becomes fascist. It turns authoritarian in its insistence on freedom.

Awarded the Nobel Prize in 1992, Walcott is a poet distinguished not only for his intelligence and honesty, but also for his fidelity to traditional form and meter. He insists that you cannot be an artist without the discipline of thought, and that discipline of thought for the poet lies in the meaning of words and structure of language. "All English verse," he says, "makes an agonized effort to return to the pentameter. It may take a devious route but its basic nostalgia and homesickness are for that language, that beat." Walcott is not an advocate of free verse: Like Auden, he thinks it "a sign of awful manners," and urges his students to study the great poets of the past, not the stuff printed in the pages of the *New Yorker*.

Born in St. Lucia in 1930, Walcott offers a unique perspective as he lives both inside and outside the tradition of English literature. He is outside the tradition because he is a postcolonial; at the same time he is deeply inside because of his thorough reading and love of English poetry, Shakespeare, and the King James Bible. His power comes from this peculiar vantage point of insider/outsider and in this he resembles Irish writers, his fellow postcolonials, and their double vision of belonging—yet not belonging.

"I've always felt some kind of intimacy with Irish poets," he writes, "because one realizes that they were also colonials with the same kind of problems that existed in the Caribbean. They were the niggers of Europe."

Selected Poems is a well-chosen miscellany from Walcott's 11 books of poetry. His whole body of work is an attempt to come to terms with identity and exile. These longings take on epic proportion in *Omeros* (1990) and in his two most recent books, *Tiepolo's Hound* (2000) and *The Prodigal* (2004). *Omeros*, Greek for Homer, is a Caribbean epic of two fishermen, and Achilles and Hector's Trojan war over a woman named Helen. It is a noble attempt to make an epic out of a local row, but in our age, the difficulties for an epic are

Derek Walcott, 2005

Corbis / Micheline Pelletier

insurmountable. Epics come out of a civilization united in shared beliefs anchored in the eternal.

In *Omeros*, Walcott alludes to this:

Courage was out of fashion
Just as Faith had gone out from every hymn.

Yet *Omeros* has many beautiful passages of poetry shoring up the ruin of civilization. A piety comes through:

O thou my Zero, is an impossible prayer,
Utter extinction is still a doubtful conceit.
Though we pray to nothing, nothing cannot be there.

And the poet holds faith in poetry.

Rhyme remains the parenthesis of palms
Shielding a candle's tongue, it is the language's
Desire to enclose the loved one in its arms.

Tiepolo's Hound is a sojourn of artistic vision. The poet seeking identity in Europe finds that her museums demean him to the status of "Island boy," while Europe itself is in a process of disintegration.

An age the size of a cloud over a wood
erased all myth: slow intellectual doubt
diminished awe.
…. Till every
Frame held bending smoke and the raw
noise of industry.

Walcott comes to the realization that "Man is a small island who contains cisterns of sorrow." Christianity defines man as a "homo viator," believing humankind to be on a journey through the temporal world toward eternal salvation. Walcott's poetry struggles toward faith.

In his introduction, Edward Baugh suggests that "Walcott advanced the idea that one learns better about God from the teachings of nature." And in Walcott's poetry, nature is often praying: "Aves of Ocean," "Benediction of trees saying their beads the bamboos bent over their pews," "Hail heron and gull full of grace."

Though sorrow claimed him for awhile, Walcott is a poet of hope in "that line of light that shines from the other shore," and Walcott the prodigal son returns home to St. Lucia, named after the saint of light and vision.

I'm reminded of another postcolonial poet, Patrick Kavanagh, another islander who, after much suffering in Dublin for telling the truth, also came to safe harbor:

And you must go inland and be
Lost in compassion's ecstasy
Where suffering soars in Summer air
The millstone has become a star. ♦

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The Student Princes

A child is the father to the president here.

BY KATHERINE EASTLAND

This fun, interactive exhibit about the education of 20th-century presidents presents more than 150 artifacts from the presidential libraries, most of which will go on tour after the show's debut in Washington.

School House to White House: The Education of the Presidents
The National Archives
Through January 1, 2008

The artifacts paint quirky, humble portraits of men when they were boys in love with summertime and beribboned young ladies. Visitors will learn tidbits hard to find elsewhere, such as what 16-year-old Barbara wrote (in a jumbled, curvy hand) to George H.W. Bush after he invited her to a Christmas promenade. Or what grades the boys made in classes such as "deportment" and "hygiene." Or how gracefully Gerald Ford punted footballs.

These and other specimens adorn six spaces, each highlighting an aspect of education, whether formal—as in the first three, which track grade school, high school, and college—or nonacademic, as in the last three, which track extracurricular activities, sports, and the presidents' personal reflections on their schooldays. The dominant colors are, fittingly, primaries: ruler yellow, brick red, sports-locker blue. Yes, there are lockers in the sports section. And yes, every passing child opens and closes all nine to see pictures of the presidents with their sports teams.

While I was admiring (and, I admit, delighting in) the hats in Franklin Roosevelt's class photo, a businessman type nudged me: "Was this the guy who dropped the nukes?" Well, the old maxim applies: There are no stupid questions. Despite its hazy history, his inquiry touched on what the show omits: what the boys became, the stuff that transcends ordinariness.

Exhibit coordinator Jennifer Nichols explains that "[the presidents] are uncommon men, but we all share common experiences."

Of course. But here we find the common divorced from the uncommon. Consider the first scene of the exhibit, copied right out of Norman Rockwell: Two windows trimmed in moth-munched lace, and set in a wallpapered wall. Resting on one windowsill, a 14-inch television runs a silent film called *Future Presidents at Play*. At one moment, we see Ronald

Katherine Eastland is an intern at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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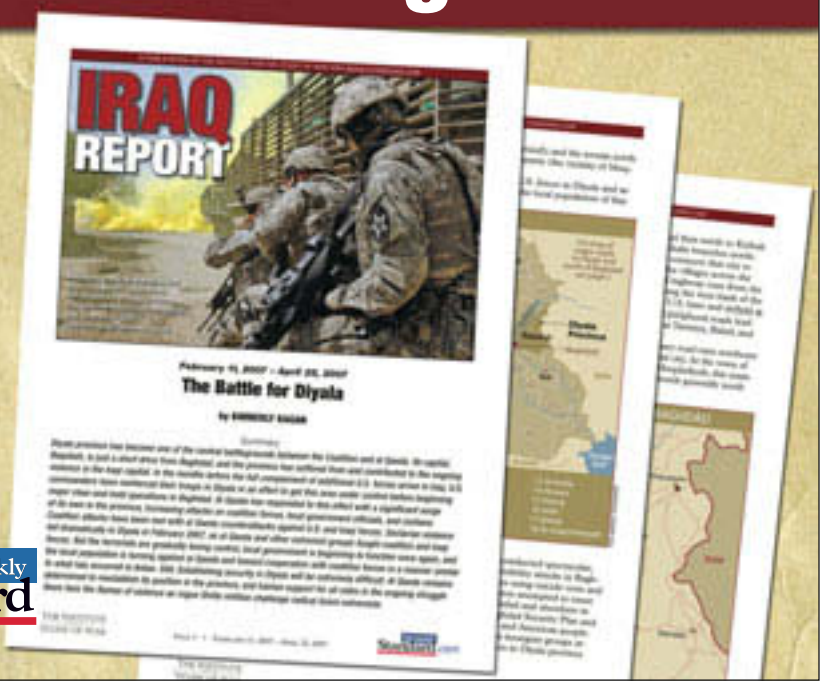

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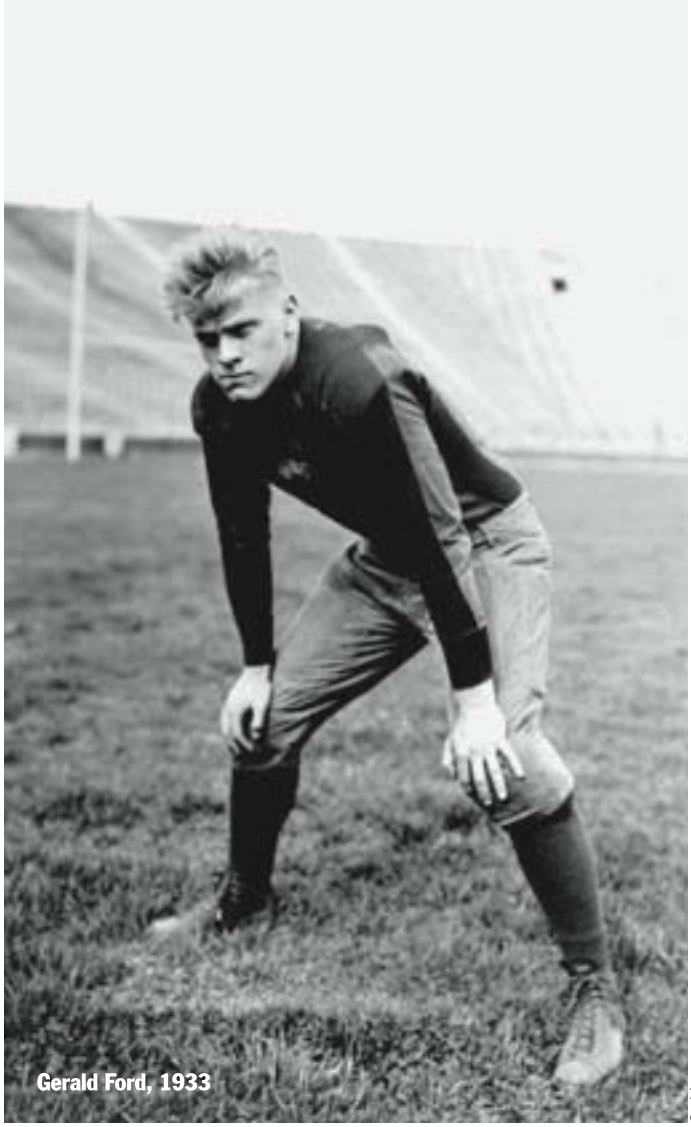
Reagan gracefully diving from a pier; in the next, there's John F. Kennedy bumping elbows with friends. In the other window are black-and-white snapshots, including one of five-year-old Jimmy Carter feeding his pony, Lady Lee.

It's easy to feel at home here: Like Jimmy Carter, we all possess cute, sometimes embarrassing, family photos. (And if our parents were tech-savvy, and affluent, we have some home movies, too.) The ordinary abounds. In the adjacent room, painted Ticonderoga yellow and lined with old-fashioned desks, there are scores of report cards. One girl in red glasses showed her mom an especially abysmal grade (55) JFK made on a Latin test at age 13. The lesson: Kids can make a few substellar grades and still grow up just fine, perhaps even sit in the Oval Office one day. (Not necessarily a bad message for a grade-obsessed culture.)



Gerald Ford, 1933

Corbis

All these documents are common, playing a part in the fabric of everyday kid life. So when children find something familiar in a museum, they gravitate towards it to see how they measure up. And when they take note, like the girl in red glasses, that the leaders of their country were imperfect like them, the knowledge comes as a relief.

There are a few moments when kids can see inklings of nobility. One comes from the pencil of an eighth-grader who, years later, would be faced with the decision to "drop the nukes." Harry Truman, not yet a master of punctuation, wrote that "a true heart and a strong mind and a great deal of courage and I think a man will get through the world."

Yet instead of filling its space with more documents like this, the exhibit keeps on showing things like Bill Clinton's "Stardusters" music stand, Gerald Ford's letter sweater, a photo of the Bushes, 41 and 43, in matching outfits, and lots of diplomas. All of which are nice, and can ground the presidents as real people in children's imaginations; but, when not complemented with enough "uncommon" artifacts, they present incomplete (if entertaining) portraits. The ordinary and the extraordinary require each to enrich the other.

At the end of "School Houses" some effort is made to connect the boys with the men they became. In this section, called "Memories," there are a few scrapbooks with photographs, and there's a television playing a video of the presidents all grown up and talking—with a kind of wistful, grandfatherly charm—about their schooldays. Richard Nixon talks about how he wished a grade-school teacher could have worked with him in the White House: She always doled out the best advice! And then everyone lets out a quiet laugh and leaves.

"Memories" and the rest of "School House" lack an element of the heroic. Departing the show, neither the child nor the adult comes away in awe of, or even with a deeper respect for, the presidency; only a warm sense of familiarity. Nonetheless, in the opening scene, a few documents reveal that the presidents themselves had heroes. Here are Ronald Reagan's words, framed on a wooden shelf:

> During those first years in Dixon, I was a voracious reader, and once I found a fictional hero I liked, I would consume everything I could about him. After reading one Rover Boys book, for example, I wouldn't stop until I'd finished all of them.

Beside this, the words of Dwight D. Eisenhower:

> My first reading love was ancient history. . . . Such people as Hannibal, Caesar, Pericles, Socrates, Themistocles, Miltiades, and Leonidas were my white hats, my heroes. Xerxes, Darius, Alcibiades, Brutus, and Nero wore black ones.

Children would do well to follow this passion for reading. As one mother said to her son, standing beside an exhibit bookcase: "Pick one of the books the presidents liked. We'll buy a copy on the way home."

Replied the boy: "May I pick two? I think I like Caesar *and* Tarzan!" ♦

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Parody

"Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama issued a pointed warning yesterday to Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, saying that as president he would be prepared to order U.S. troops into that country unilaterally if it failed to act on its own against Islamic extremists."

—Washington Post, *August 2*

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KUCINICH TO KAZAKHSTAN:

YOU'RE EITHER WITH US, OR AGAINST US

Wacko Dem reads the riot act to Central Asian strongman: 'You can run, but you can't hide'

WASHINGTON—In a bid to steal thunder from his rival in the race for the Democratic presidential nomination, Ohio's caffeinated antiwar congressman, Rep. Dennis (The Menace) Kucinich, turned up the heat yesterday on Illinois Sen. Barack Obama, who has threatened our ally Pakistan with military invasion.

"I've seen 'Borat' twice," the pint-sized peacenik told a standing room-only crowd at the Center for American Progress, a Washington think tank, "and if President-for-life Nursultan Nazarbaev thinks he can blow us off in the war against Islamic extremists, I've got news for him: The Yanks are coming!"

Kucinich, who was mayor of Cleveland from 1977 to 1979, knows what it means to confront a deadly foe head-on: Dangerous water rats infested the picturesque Monongahela River during his

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